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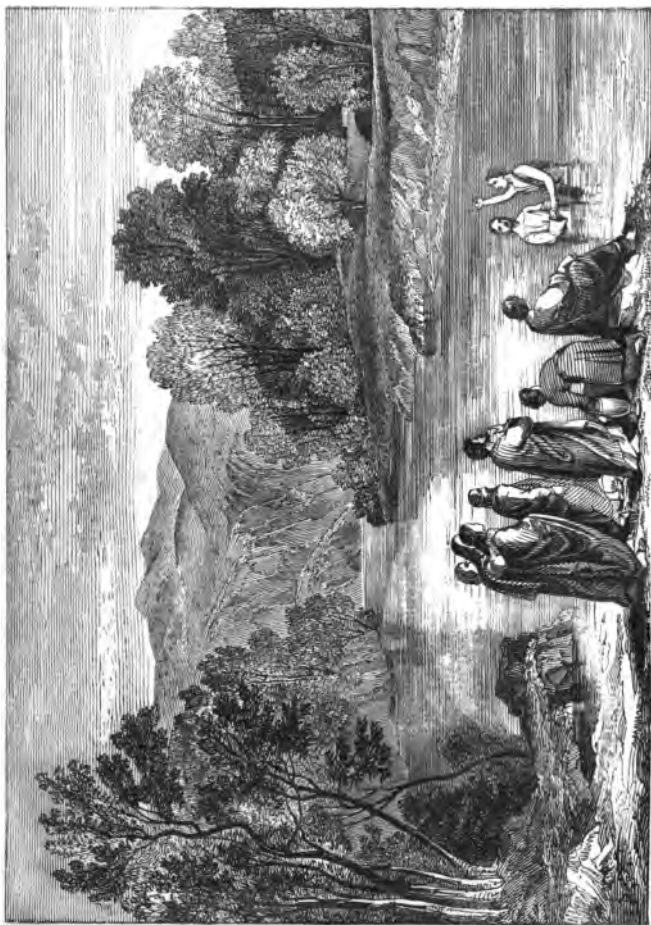
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BAPTISM OF THE HOLY REDEEMER.

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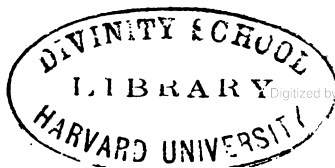
THE
BAPTISMS
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT:

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE ORDINANCE
FROM ITS ADMINISTRATIONS AS RECORDED
BY THE INSPIRED WRITERS.

BY
JOSEPH BELCHER, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
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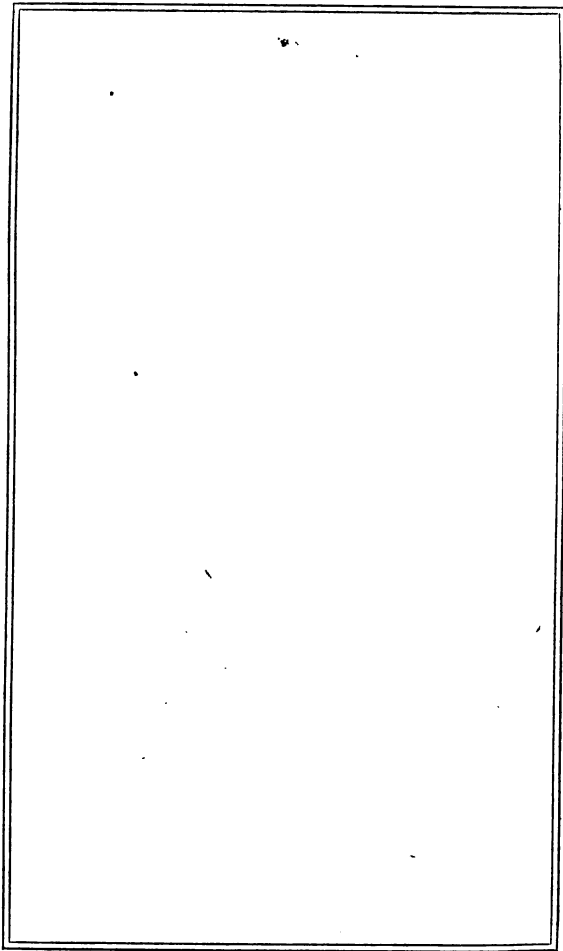
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P R E F A C E.

WHEN a new book solicits the patronage of the public, however small it may be, it is expected that the author should make somewhat of a respectful apology for its appearance, and state the design he had in writing it. And as the number of new works is increasing, it is possible that in process of time, readers will only be disposed to study those for whose production there really is some necessity.

The author of this little volume would account for its publication, by saying, that he has long felt the desirableness of an enlarged acquaintance with the facts of Scripture, as illustrative of its great princi-

ples, and as presenting truth to the minds of persons generally in the most attractive and impressive form. The idea of the volume first suggested itself some ten years ago, and has sometimes formed a topic of conversation with those whose judgment he respects. They have very generally recommended the author to work it out, and he has now attempted to do so.

Alas, how wide is the difference between a plan in idea, and in its execution! After all the pains he has taken, the work is far more imperfect than he once hoped it would be. Still it has cost him labor;—and labor which he hopes will be most evident to the most intelligent. Not unfrequently hours have been spent in prosecuting an inquiry the result of which has been given in a single line; and pains have been bestowed to furnish the clearest and simplest statement of facts.

On the whole, the author of this volume is not without hope that he has, to some

extent, succeeded in presenting scriptural truth in its own spirit, and in a manner which while it may not excite the disgust of the learned, shall be especially acceptable as a family volume, permitted to lie on the table of the parlor or the drawing-room.

And now, if it may not be regarded as presumption, its writer would say, that with the highest respect and esteem, he dedicates this little volume to the service of the vast and important denomination of Christians, with which his ancestors for generations past have been identified, and association with whose members has been the source, under God, of his happiness and his hopes. In this, the land of his adoption, the home of his children, and he trusts the place of his grave, the members of the Baptist denomination have planted the tree of holy freedom; and they are now called on, more zealously than ever to extend the truth of God. In such truth may it be the happi-

ness of the writer and the reader, through infinite mercy, to die.

That this volume may advance the cause of New Testament religion, is the devout prayer of its

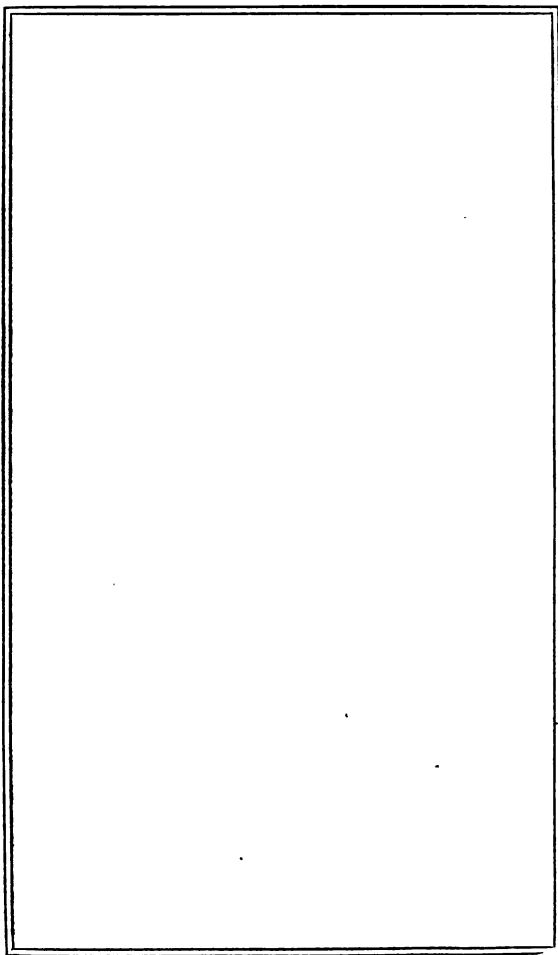
AUTHOR.

Philadelphia, October, 1847.

BAPTISMS

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT.



BAPTISMS
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

THE HOLY REDEEMER.

MATT. III. MARK I. LUKE III. JOHN I.

But John forbade,
And hurried to his feet, and stayed him there,
And said, "Nay, Master ! I have need of *thine*,
Not thou of *mine* !" And Jesus, with a smile
Of heavenly sadness, met his earnest looks,
And answered, "Suffer it to be so now ;
For thus it doth become us to fulfil
All righteousness.

WILLIS.

"AMONG them that are born of women,
there hath not risen a greater than John
the Baptist." Such was the testimony borne
by the infallible teacher to the son of Zechariah
and Elizabeth ; a descendant of Aaron,
a native of Hebron, and the reformer of
Judea, more than eighteen centuries ago.

Four hundred years had elapsed since a prophet had appeared in Israel; intense anxiety now prevailed among the reflecting portion of the Jews, as from various circumstances they were led about this time to expect the appearance of the promised Messiah; so that when John appeared professing to be the harbinger of the anointed one, and the prophet sustaining the spirit of Elijah, foretold as the predecessor of that illustrious personage, we are not surprised that attention should be very generally attracted towards him.

In addition to these facts, there were two others which tended to deepen the public impression. The first was, that the person and the character of John were singular. He appeared not in splendid raiment, nor did he claim high personal respect. He had been trained in the obscurity and the simplicity of a Judean village, was clothed in the coarse garments composed of camel's hair, worn by the lowest class of society, and instead of the magnificent girdle used by the great, he threw around his loins one of untanned leather. His food was in accordance with his appearance, and consisted

principally of an insect plainly cooked, or sometimes eaten even raw, by the common people, and of honey furnished by the bees of the wilderness and found on the rocks of that thinly inhabited country. On such a man,—coming forth from his privacy, claiming to be a servant of the Most High, and calling on men of all classes to abandon their sins, to change their feelings and their conduct towards God and man, and to expect the coming of Messiah, for whose manifestation he was daily looking,—all might gaze with intense surprise and admiration.

But that which would still more increase their interest, was, that he introduced, in the name of the Supreme Governor of the world, a new religious ordinance. Planting himself on a lovely spot, about twenty-five miles east of Jerusalem, on the banks of the Jordan, where the people had to cross that river as a public highway, and where a number of small houses were built for the accommodation of travellers, he insisted on the infinite importance of men repenting of their sins, and submitting to be immersed in the river in the name of the approaching Mes-

siah. This act he required as a testimony of their belief in his speedy appearance, of their renunciation of their former sins and errors, and of their entire submission to his government. So did this "more than a prophet" preach, and in that enchanting situation, adorned with all the beauties of nature, did many listen to his voice; and in that interesting river, near to the ford over which the Israelites, more than fourteen hundred years before, had passed to take possession of Palestine, did John baptize very many "from Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan."* His fidelity to his mission was dauntless. No consideration could induce him to abandon his work; he knew no fear when improper persons claimed the holy ordinance; but felt that a prompt refusal to administer it was his duty; and when, under the supposition that he might be the Messiah, the leading Jews of the holy city sent to inquire of him as to that fact, his humility and love of the truth led him at once to declare

* The spot here referred to, the scene of the Redeemer's baptism, is given in the frontispiece of this volume, from the pencil of a recent traveller.

that he was only a "voice," which was sent to announce the approach of the eternal "Word;" or, in other words, that "he was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness" of the near manifestation "of that Light." Truly it was a most interesting spot, and here was a most remarkable preacher! Here the characters of men became developed, and here thousands commenced their happiness for eternity. Here too, as in ancient days, when the Ephraimites attempted to pass, and were slain when they could not pronounce the required "Shibboleth," so now, when the proud Pharisees refused to take on themselves the whole yoke of the coming Christ, John did not hesitate to destroy all their hopes of honor and happiness. It was a hallowed scene on which angels must have gazed from day to day with increasing joy, as they witnessed the solemn professions of a numerous "people prepared for the Lord."

It is always important clearly to understand the nature of Divine ordinances. The whole tenor of the New Testament shows us that baptism is a gracious appointment of the Great Supreme, resting entirely on his

authority, and regulated by his wisdom ; by which those who profess faith in his word and subjection to his government, become separated from the world, renounce their former character and conduct, and dedicate themselves wholly, entirely, and forever, to the love and service of the blessed God. As the ordinance originates in the Divine will, so in all its arrangements regard must be had to his recorded law. The highest dignity of man is to ascertain the will of his Supreme Governor, and then to yield cordial and cheerful obedience to it.

Between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth, there existed a near relationship. Remarkable circumstances had attended the birth of each, and their mothers, especially, were eminent for their piety. As they had lived at a distance from each other, it is not certain that they had previously enjoyed opportunities to have much acquaintance the one with the other. Or if they had met at the great assemblies in the holy city, their intercourse had been but inconsiderable ; and certainly John had no idea of the infinitely exalted character of Jesus as the Messiah. Important discoveries

on this subject were about to develop themselves.

Another fact arrests our attention. Eighteen years have elapsed since any thing has been publicly heard of Jesus. When but twelve years of age we saw him in the temple discoursing with the learned, and showing his extraordinary superiority of understanding and character; but where has he been since, and how has he been occupied? It would seem probable that since that period his father has passed from earth, and that by his labor he has provided for the wants of his mother; while it cannot be doubted that his soul has been filled with all the holy emotions which could prepare him for the unspeakably momentous scenes in which he has to sustain the most important part.

While John is exciting so great attention at Bethabara, or perhaps the spot might be more properly called Bethany, Jesus undertakes a journey of three days from Nazareth to be baptized by him. History has recorded facts of vast grandeur connected with the inauguration of the great into office, and with the entrance of sovereigns on their

high dignities, but never did the eyes of angels rest on a scene of higher moral grandeur than that of the Baptism of Jesus. He is about to separate himself from all that is earthly, to devote himself to the work marked out for him from eternity, to manifest before the world a life of immaculate purity and benevolence, to glorify the holy law, and to give an example of entire perfection of character.

We are ready to ask, what means this conduct? Is not baptism as practised by John a confession of sins and a profession of repentance, as well as a dedication of the heart and life to holiness? But Jesus has no sins to confess, nor is it possible that he can profess a repentance of which he cannot be the subject; he has never so mingled with the world as to be polluted with its principles, spirit or pleasures;—he has no sinful companions to abandon, no vices to renounce, no pleasures to forsake, no profession of increasing holiness to make; why then should *he* be baptized? These questions, or something like them, seem to have suggested themselves to the Baptist; for no sooner did Jesus approach him, than, by

some extraordinary impulse, by some infallible sign, he became impressed with his dignity, and *felt*, like good old Simeon, his infinite superiority. The imagination hovers over the scenes of that lovely day. How beautiful the face of nature that morning! How bright the summer's sun,—how calm the glassy waters,—how silent the vast assembly, only comparable with the “silence in heaven” as its inhabitants looked down on the passing events, which exceeded in interest and importance all which even they could describe!

We are fully prepared to sympathize with John as he looked on Jesus, and as the truth flashed on his soul that this was the Messiah—“the desire of all nations.” We wonder not that when this exalted personage requests to be baptized, the holy administrator should shrink into nothingness in his own apprehension, and that overwhelmed in humility, he should seek to decline the honor now devolved upon him. Before men John stood forth as great—even a messenger from heaven; but before the Messiah he felt himself the embodiment of unworthiness—not deserving even to per-

form the meanest of all duties, that of unloosing the sandals of his Lord. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Describe who can the feelings of the Baptist—the intense interest of the spectators—and above all, the emotions of Messiah himself on this solemn and momentous occasion.

And what saith Jesus to the objection of his servant, improperly made, but the motive of which his Lord well understood? He does not deny his own dignity, nor does he reproach John for his backwardness in the performance of his duty. Neither does he change his design, but requires that his request be complied with. "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." What did this language import? Did he not mean to intimate that as John was divinely commissioned to preach and baptize, so it was important that *He* should confirm his embassy, and show to the world the high obligation under which all men are laid to obey the Sovereign of the Universe? Would not Jesus thus at once show honor to the law of heaven, and confer dignity on the ministry of Divine appoint-

ment? And especially is it important to remember that the Messiah now stood before John as the second Adam, the representative and the example of all his people in all time to come; and that he knew the desirableness, nay the necessity, of placing before them an example of perfect submission to Divine requirements. As all the laws of Heaven originate in infinite wisdom and benevolence, so, on no account must they be neglected. No disciple of Christ can think himself too highly elevated to obey the law of God when even Jesus, the Eternal Son, "learned obedience." No excuse can stand in the way of the performance of duty when Jesus took a long journey to be publicly baptized in Jordan.

Retire now from the engagements of earth and look at that scene! See the devoted servant of God leading Messiah into the deep waters of the river; read the countenance of each, how impressive is every feature, how instructive every look! Jesus has no sins to confess, but he feels the vast load of our transgressions which he had to sustain, and would impress us with the necessity of confessing them, and of forsaking

them ;—he can make no more entire dedication of himself to the service of God than he has felt heretofore, but he can thus impress the minds of his people in all future time with the importance of their entire devotedness to holy obedience, and can be filled with the grandeur of the undertaking on which he was about publicly to enter, and which should occupy him till the end of time—that of the salvation and the government of his people. He could not be separated from the world more than he had been in the spirit of his mind, but he could make that separation more public, and more distinctly marked ; he could declare and commence open war with its god, and could attract the hearts of his people from its dangers and ruin. O for a disposition to study this scene in all its aspects, to cherish on these delightful river banks all right feelings, and to practice all the lessons it is so well adapted to impress on our minds !

Meekly in Jordan's holy stream
The great Redeemer bowed ;
Bright was the glory's sacred beam
That hushed the wondering crowd.

O that it were possible to read the heart

of Jesus as he rose from the hallowed stream, and walked towards the river's bank! What a scene of labor, of suffering, of death, and of ultimate glory was before him! All things were naked and open to his eye. From this hour the attention of the universe would be fixed on him; every action, every word, every throbbing of his heart would tell on the glory of heaven, and on the happiness of earth, and on the misery of his enemies. All on earth was indescribable suffering—all beyond it was infinite glory. He had before him another baptism of suffering and of woe, and oh! the agony of his spirit till it were fully accomplished,—the salvation of his people completed, and his eternal joy and honor beyond the cross, and by its means, secured! Angels themselves could not yet enter into the whole mighty scheme. But for his Deity, mysteriously united with manhood, his humanity must have sunk under the weight of his mighty emotions.

We wonder not that he came out of the water "praying." He well knew the importance of maintaining intercourse with heaven. He was man, and felt his depend-

ence on God for constant supplies of good ; he had before him a mighty, arduous and continued conflict with the powers of earth and hell, and it was all-important that he should receive strength from on high. It is of great moment that we should often think of a praying Jesus, and remember that he has left us "an example that we should follow his steps."

But we are now called to contemplate a change in the scene. The liquid wave, in which the incarnate Lord of heaven has been just immersed, rolls on silent and clear as before ; it knew not its Creator ; all the vegetation around the multitude appears as usual, and the sun moves on in its accustomed brightness towards its meridian splendor ; but an excitement is created in the heavenly world. Here was a scene

"Such as earth saw never,—

Such as Heaven stoops down to see."

The firmament opens, the clouds retire, a light is seen "above the brightness of the sun ;" a glory resembling the ancient Shechinah, hovers over the head of the baptized Messiah ; and a voice, clear and majestic, issues from the throne of the Eternal,

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

What a delightful association! A Dove resting on a Lamb! The heavenly Dove, on an atoning Lamb! What emotions filled the heart of Jesus now! What views did the Baptist entertain! Who shall describe the mighty sensations of that assembly? Who can ever despise the Great Teacher thus introduced to the world? Never was devotedness to God so entire; never was the approbation of heaven so distinctly expressed; never was work so great as that on which Jesus now entered. The ancient Christians used to say, “Go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the Trinity;” and well they might say so; for here the Father recognizes his Son, and calls on mankind to hear him; the Son manifests his “glory, full of grace and truth;” and the Holy Spirit commences his great work of glorifying the Son.

It cannot be unimportant here to remark that this holy baptism was the commencement of Christ’s great work of securing the salvation of his people. From this hour he was pursued by the temptations of Satan

and the malice of earth; from henceforth he had to live only for the fulfilment of the divine law, for the instruction of men, for the exemplification of perfect holiness, and to suffer and to die for sinners. Baptism is the commencement of a life eminently devoted to God.

We must not retire from a spot where we have felt such hallowed emotions, and have cherished feelings of the highest admiration, without carrying with us some of the practical lessons which the whole transaction suggests. Be it remembered, then, that in this, as in many other parts of his conduct, Jesus was the *example* of those who profess to be his friends. He teaches the duties we have to perform, and the spirit and the manner in which we should discharge them. It is not for us to dictate our own path, but to walk in his. To use the language of Mr. Bradley, a living Episcopalian clergyman in London, in reference to this very subject, "It bids you obey the divine law, not scan it. It bids you do the will of God, not criticise it. It says, 'Let men talk as they will; let even the godly on the earth, ministers, and prophets, reason, and explain

away, and dissuade; let nature condemn, and feeling shrink; all these things are to be disregarded. Is the command plain? Then there must be no reasoning about the matter; no conferring with flesh and blood. The right hand must come off; the right eye must be plucked out. You must go down with Christ into Jordan. You must 'follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.' The will of God must be done, and every command of God obeyed.' "

We learn, too, the spirit in which the holy ordinance should be regarded. It needs a solemn preparation, it must be performed in the temper of fervent prayer, it must be regarded as a preparative for temptation, labor and suffering; and must be reviewed in subsequent life, as the putting on of the harness of the Christian soldier.

And finally, let us not forget that while this duty is important, yet its discharge, unattended with the Divine approbation, and unaccompanied with the influence of the Holy Spirit, will be without advantage. Let us then diligently pray for the Spirit of God; let us covet this best of all gifts; and under his gracious guidance, let us

follow the Lord Jesus on earth until he
calls us to his throne in heaven.

Fellowship with him possessing,
Let us die to earth and sin ;
Let us rise to enjoy the blessing
Which the faithful soul shall win :
May we ever
Follow where our Lord has been.

THE FIRST BELIEVERS IN JESUS.

JOHN III. 22-36; IV. 1, 2.

"Twas good to see the mighty throng
Attentive to the holy seer;
"Twas blest to hear each broken sigh,
And look on every crystal tear :
They heard of Christ, they loved his name,
And were baptized, unmoved by shame.

No subject can be more interesting, or more profitable in its study, than the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the commencement to the close of his career, he furnished a perfect example of *active piety*. It is a great mistake to suppose that the religion required of man is mere quietism, or that duty can be discharged by simple contemplation. All in heaven is holy activity; "his servants serve him day and night continually;" and well has it been said by one of our own poets:—

"A God inactive were a God unblest."

No sooner had Jesus, by holy baptism,

entered on his life of public obedience to God, than he gave full evidence, that his meat and his drink was to do his will. A single short sentence contains his complete character and eulogy,—“He went about doing good.” Collecting together his few friends, who had attached themselves to him, anxious to listen to his instructions and to carry out his requests; he undertook a journey of holy benevolence, not yet fully to declare his own character and office, but to proclaim the duty of repentance, because the reign of heaven was at hand, and the Messiah was about to appear. He baptizes those who receive his doctrines, by the agency of his disciples, probably because he would prevent any future indulgence of party spirit, or pride on account of some having been baptized by him, and others only by his servants.

While Jesus and his immediate attendants were thus laboring in one place, John was preaching and baptizing at another; thus extending the common cause to which all were devoted. The place of John's labors was a small town in the district of the half tribe of Manasseh; it was adjoining Salim,

on the west of the Jordan, about fifty miles north-west of Jerusalem, and twenty-four east of Samaria. No vestige whatever of this town is now to be found; but the solemn transactions of that period can never be lost to the memory of those engaged in them; nor can their full influence be ascertained only as they shall be developed by eternal ages.

It might be easy to raise a discussion as to the similarity or the differences between the baptism of John and that now administered under the personal direction of Jesus. A careful examination of the subject, will show us that in all fundamental principles, at least, they were the same. Both baptized into the faith of a Messiah about to manifest himself; hence as Jesus became known, the ordinance appears to have gradually sunk into abeyance; for we hear nothing of it for two or three years after he began to be recognized and received as the Christ. Christian baptism, as instituted in the commission given by the ascended Saviour, appears to us to have been the revival of the ordinance, given under a new sanction, with some important changes,

and to be observed under different circumstances. The grand requirement made at the time of which we are now speaking, both by Jesus and John,—the one qualification essential to the ordinance was—faith in a coming Messiah.

It is important here to mark that none but persons of this character were admitted to the holy rite. Hence we are told that Jesus "*made*" disciples. They bore not this character originally. The truth had to be presented to them, to be explained, and to be urged. Holy influence had to be exerted, and when the desired happy results followed, when they became decided, docile, teachable "*disciples*," they were baptized. So with John; his candidates voluntarily "*came*" to be immersed. They were not compelled—not drawn by the influence of their fellow men; but "*came*" and professed a change of mind and conduct, and a belief in the coming anointed one, and their entire readiness to submit to his government; and on this solemn profession they also were baptized. Hence, we may remark, that when the Pharisees, with minds inflated with pride, and with the hope of securing

honor and profit in the expected temporal kingdom of Messiah, came to be baptized of John, he unhesitatingly refused the ordinance until they should give full evidence of a radical change of disposition. The kingdom of Messiah is purely spiritual, and obedience must neither spring from worldly motives nor be intended to accomplish worldly ends.

Nor must we forget here, that John did not regard his baptism as the ultimatum, even of the ordinance itself. He always directed public attention to the appearance of an infinitely greater personage than himself,—and to a baptism far superior to that which he administered; and certainly it becomes us to remember that *we* enjoy this clearer light, are informed of the more excellent ordinance, and are invited to the far higher privilege. As, in this respect, “the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist,” we ought not to forget the weighty responsibility under which we are laid, nor to neglect a duty which has so high a sanction.

We are deeply interested, as we read the narrative, with the fact that the holy cause

met in different places, even at this early period, with so great success. It would seem that the numbers who applied for baptism, and who were admitted to the rite, could not have been small. It appears that at Jerusalem there were those who believed in Christ "when they saw the miracles which he did," but they did not avow their faith, nor did they enjoy the confidence of Christ. But we may hope that in the rural districts in which the baptizing parties now were, there were more of honesty, frankness, and simplicity, than in the city. Alas, that large collections of men should usually be found more distinguished for evils than their less enlightened and poorer brethren. Thus, by the influence of their example, injuring a cause which they profess to love.

A question arises in this connection which may be regarded either as curious or useful, according to the views of those inclined to propose it. Did he who stood as the head of one of these baptizing bands, and who could read the hearts of all that wished to be baptized, admit to the holy ordinance any who only professed repentance and faith, or was it really the case that in every

applicant his Omniscience recognized transparent sincerity? If the former, we should feel impressed with the solemn fact that the ungodly may make high pretensions, be united with the most eminent followers of Christ on earth, and be shut out of heaven at last; if we cherish the latter view, we may learn that hypocrites shun eminent holiness, and that in this instance we may contemplate the baptism of many without fearing the danger of any of them falling away.

It is painful to observe, in times of religious concern, that many persons show a disposition to excite speculation and discussion on very inferior topics. This was the case with the woman of Samaria, when she became impressed with the superiority of Jesus, and when he brought before the eye of her mind the most important topic which could engage her attention. And so it was here; and it seems too to have commenced with those who professedly adhered to the new religion—the disciples of John. Some of these persons and the Jews entered, it should seem, on a discussion as to the precise origin and import of baptism. Had it

any connection with the ancient washings and purifications of the Levitical ceremony, and which was to be deemed the more dignified and exalted of the two persons now administering the ordinance? The disciples of John appealed to their teacher in a way which, had he been a different man, might have excited in his breast emotions of jealousy and of envy. They tell him that the remarkable person, whom he recently immersed in the Jordan, was now baptizing, and that "all men came to him;" or, in other words, that he was attended by vast multitudes. We can neither approve of the motives nor the manner of their communication; and still more must we regret that we should even now have occasion to lament the manifestation of the same disposition in our own day.

But who does not admire the conduct of John in the new and very trying circumstances in which he was placed? He at once declares that all moral greatness,—all true excellence cometh from God, and that wherever these gifts are found we should admire them, and pay respect to their possessors. He does far more than this; for

he teaches the vast superiority of Jesus to himself, and is content to be regarded simply as the friend of the bridegroom who is come from heaven to unite the church to himself as his bride. John exults in the incarnate Messiah, and shows the greatness of his own mind, and his entire devotedness to the cause he has espoused, by declaring his joy that Jesus was increasing in his acceptance with the people; and his entire readiness to retire from all his popularity now that he has introduced one infinitely superior to himself, and one whose empire must increase to the end of time. The feeling of John was, let all and every thing perish, let my acceptance with the people be destroyed, let my honor be turned into disgrace, if his cause—the cause of holiness and salvation—may but progress! The Baptist knew the dignity of Jesus; he knew that Jehovah loved him, and had given all things into his hand, and what could he, the servant of God, do better than cordially to acquiesce in the arrangement of heaven, and to desire the glory of Messiah rather than his own! Every true minister of Christ is entirely content to be

nothing in public estimation, if the glory of his great Master may thus be manifested and advanced. O for more of the true nobility of John! O for the spirit of this eminent servant of Jesus, who, notwithstanding that his popularity was daily lessening, went on to preach the glories of his Lord, and to connect his hearers with his cause till he was dragged forth to prison and to death! His one object was to fulfil his course of preparing his countrymen to receive the Messiah, and having introduced "the Lamb of God" to them, he pressed onward to the end of his career; content at once to pass where he could mingle his great soul with spirits of a kindred order in eternally praising Messiah for his infinite love.

Turning from John, to take a parting look at Jesus, we are struck with the fact that when a spirit of dissension and of disputation had taken possession of the minds of those by whom he was surrounded, "he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee." Christ is never to be found where any subject is more prominent than his own character and doctrines, or where any spirit is

cherished inconsistent with his own "meekness and gentleness." It would be well for this fact to be often practically considered, and we should then not be at a loss to account for the withdrawal of his gracious presence from us.

In concluding our remarks on the scene which has passed under our present review, we must observe that our Lord, some time after this occurrence, inquired of his hearers as to the origin of John's baptism ; teaching us that divine ordinances are to be seriously considered, in their origin and character, and then cordially obeyed ; and moreover, we see from this whole narrative that true moral greatness is shown in the love and obedience of Christ, and in the pursuit of his glory. So felt John—and so felt these believers in the Messiahship of Jesus.

With cheerful feet may we advance,
And run the Christian race ;
And midst the troubles of the way,
Find all-sufficient grace.

THE PENTECOSTAL CONVERTS.

ACTS II.

To them shall leave in charge
To teach all nations what of him they learned,
And his salvation ; them who shall believe
Baptizing in the profluent stream, the sign
Of washing them from guilt of sin to life
Pure ; and in mind prepared, if so befall,
For death, like that which the Redeemer died.

MILTON.

PERHAPS it would be impossible to consider an event more profoundly interesting in itself, or more important in its consequences than the interview between our Lord and his disciples, immediately before his ascension to heaven. He had lived on earth to publish the grand scheme of reconciliation with God, and died to make atonement for sin. He had risen again from the dead, giving full evidence of the perfection of his sacrifice, and its acceptance with God. Since his resurrection, he had associated during the period of forty days with

his immediate disciples. He had finished the work the Father gave him to do on earth, and he was now about to ascend his mediatorial throne entirely to complete his gracious intention of the full salvation of his people. He had himself sustained the office of a *prophet*, but his people have yet many things to learn, which they must acquire by the agency of the Holy Spirit, whom he was about to send; he had, like a *priest*, offered a great sacrifice, but he must enter the holiest of all to present the blood, and to become our intercessor; all power in heaven and in earth had been placed in his hands, and he must now, more fully than ever before, show himself a *king* ruling in the hearts of his people for the advancement of his own glory, and arranging all the affairs of the universe with a view to their benefit. He is about also to enter heaven, as the "Forerunner" of his people, to prepare its mansions for their reception, and them for its enjoyment, and then to introduce them to its glory.

But before he withdrew from earth, it was needful that he should give his commands and instructions to his followers. See him,

then, surrounded by five hundred of his disciples, on Mount Olivet, so named from the quantity of olives which grew upon it. On this lovely spot, some three quarters of a mile from Jerusalem, he had once stood and wept over the sins and the impending doom of that city; there he had been accustomed to retire from the blasphemies of his enemies, and the indifference of his friends, to hold communion with his "Father in heaven;" in a garden at the foot of this hallowed mount, he had entered on that scene of agony through which he passed to open to us the door of salvation; and now from its summit, attended by a million of his angelic servants, would he ascend to heaven. He had finished the work which his Father had given him to do on earth,—had made an end of sin—had risen triumphant from the grave, and was just ascending to his seat at the right hand of the Eternal, when he summoned his followers to receive his final commission to evangelize the world, and to persuade men to submit to his government. It at once illustrated his glory, and furnished encouragement to his servants, when he assured them that all

power in the universe was given to him, and founded on this fact, the commission to preach the gospel to every creature, and to baptize all who believed in him into his church. He was ascending to his throne in heaven, but would first send his ambassadors to every part of earth to summon his enemies to surrender themselves to his government, to receive his pardon, and to transmit his glory from generation to generation. Then did he leave earth for his throne.

Deprived of their head, we cannot wonder that his disciples lingered about the holy city, no man among them being disposed to depart to his house and business. Besides this, they had received his positive command to stay at Jerusalem till they were endowed with heavenly power. From day to day, for ten days in succession, were they found, morning, noon, and evening, meeting for solemn conference and ardent prayer. They had seen the glory of their Lord, as he "ascended up on high," they remembered his conduct and his words, and were assured that something great was yet to come.

As day after day passed, how often, and with what mighty force would memory pre-

sent the words and the tones of the great commission—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The authority of their Great Master, his command, and his promise would alike occupy their thoughts. Nor less would they think of his direction, "tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." They, no doubt, felt the unspeakable importance of the work to which they were called, and were fully aware of their great need of higher mental and spiritual qualifications for the undertaking. But, after all, how very little did they know of what was before them! Happily they served a Master who had promised them his constant presence, and they well understood that as securing all the favors that they could desire.

Jerusalem was now greatly crowded with inhabitants. A very large number of merchants who had been residing in distant

countries, had returned to live and die in the holy city; besides which the feast of the passover had recently been celebrated, and at that feast the males from every part of Palestine had to come up to the temple; and as the recent completion of the harvest afforded them leisure, they stayed to fulfil the calls of business and of pleasure; besides all which, another great feast was at hand where again the Divine law required the attendance of every man of the holy nation. This feast was that of PENTECOST; called in the sacred writings by various names, as "the feast of weeks," on account of its being celebrated seven weeks, or a week of weeks, after the feast of unleavened bread; "the feast of harvest," and also, "the day of first fruits," for this was properly the harvest festival, when the Israelites had to present the first fruits of their corn in new bread, accompanied with thanksgivings to God. The name is Greek, and signifies the *fiftieth* day, dating from the feast of unleavened bread; and it was now also deeply interesting to the Jews because it was the anniversary of the publication of the law by Moses from Mount Sinai. The festival was

one of great solemnity ; it lasted for seven days ; and during that period very many holocausts and sacrifices for sin were offered. This, as will be seen by the thoughtful reader, was every way a suitable season for the grand events we have now to review.

It is seldom the case that the followers of Christ are found united, prayerful, and waiting for his favors, without having their largest desires soon gratified. So was it on that high day. It would seem from a careful examination of the facts, that the disciples assembled in some outer portion of the temple, perhaps in Solomon's porch, at nine o'clock in the morning, the hour of early prayer, before which time no Jew making the least pretension to piety, broke his fast, especially on such an occasion as this. While thus engaged in their devotions, two extraordinary circumstances presented themselves to the ear, and another to the eye ; a sound resembling that of a mighty rushing wind descended from heaven, and shortly after the various apostles spoke, each in a different language, to the inhabitants of the different regions between the Indus and the Bosphorus, and between the Black Sea and the

cataracts of the Nile, who were now assembled together. Nor was this a mere delusion produced by fanaticism, for as yet little had been said by any of them, besides which the whole assembly saw the flames of fire which also came down from above, in the form of tongues, and resting upon each of the leading disciples of Jesus.

The effect produced by these things on the thousands who had now assembled, was great; the commotion was beyond all description intense. Many were exceedingly astonished, and began to admire the miracle; while others, apparently steeled by prejudice, and determined to reject the crucified Nazarene and his friends, attributed the whole to drunkenness. So blind are very many, in other respects wise men, in reference to the character of the greatest works of Jehovah.

What reader is not now desirous to pause and solemnly and carefully to review this whole scene? Here are the fishermen and the tent-makers who the other day were all disconsolate, and the subjects too of unhalloed derision because they had lost their Lord, the crucified Nazarene;—they are

now within the precincts of the temple—surrounded by thousands, on whose ears rests a strange unearthly sound, more resembling wind than any thing else with which it can be compared ;—on the forehead of each of those who are called apostles, rests a heavenly flame, and from their untaught lips are heard in fluent correct strains the words of manifold languages. Surely this is the great power of God ! Let no man presume to ridicule, or even to doubt, lest the Most High should in terror vindicate his own cause.

The vindication is heard, but it comes not with terror. The voice, the reasoning, the persuasion of a man is heard. But that man has never been distinguished among his neighbors for his influence, his talents, or his learning. Nay, among his friends it has often been regretted that he possesses an ardor bordering on imprudence ; his spirit and conversation often display rashness ; and though really attached to Jesus Christ, so much so as to declare his readiness to go to prison and to death for his sake, yet was his friendship so imperfect, as afterwards to lead him to swear that he did not even know

him. But Jesus, had since that sad period, pardoned him, showed him peculiar favor, and honored him with special commands as to his duty to the church. This is the man who now rises to explain ; and vastly to increase the present excitement.

Yes, it is Peter, the man whose voice has never been heard in public before, but whose whole soul is overflowing with gratitude to a forgiving Saviour, and whose heart is all on fire to make him known. It is Peter, who is well known among his countrymen, whose faults have not been concealed, and to whom his hearers will listen with interest they never felt before. He rises invested with all the dignity of truth, conscious of his own sincerity and of the importance of the statements he is about to utter. He shows the unreasonableness of the charge which some of the congregation have preferred of the drunkenness of himself and his brethren ; illustrates a prediction of the prophet Joel, and shows how it applies to the present occasion ; and then, after sketching the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, calmly but boldly accuses them of being his murderers. Oh what a scene was presented.

now !.....No, there was not a sleepy hearer in the vast throng.....No indifference there.Who does not expect that the murderers of Jesus who now surround him by hundreds, will drag him from the hallowed spot through the streets of the city, and stone him to death? So they might have done; and so some of their neighbors really acted a short time afterwards in reference to Stephen, the proto-martyr. But so did not these men; instead of that, not less than three thousand, as the happy result of that morning's labors, earnestly sought for salvation, proposing the solemn and important inquiry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

And what caused all this? The answer is ready. The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven by the ascended Redeemer, and here He has bestowed his first fruits. Here he begins his great work of exalting Jesus, shows the necessity of his influence to convert sinners, proves how very easily he can change the greatest enemies of Christ into his friends, and encourages his ministers to pray for and to expect the bestowment of his instructions and his power.

And what counsel does this extraordinary preacher, Peter the fisherman, give to these inquiring thousands? As he has preached no new doctrines, nor sought merely to affect the passions, so now he has no new plans to propose, nor any advice to afford other than Christ has commanded. Many weeks before this the Great Master had commanded "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" and now he has, therefore, only to enjoin repentance and obedience to Christ. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." It was not needful now to exhort these persons to believe that they were sinners, for of this fact they were painfully convinced; nor need he to exhort them to hate sin, for they had already turned from it; but it was important that they should for ever renounce all connection with it—that they should abandon their former character and pursuits, that they should die to sin, to self, to the world, and that in the act of baptism they should identify themselves with Christ

and his people ; that thus old things should pass away, and all should become new. What advice could be more suitable to their circumstances,—what acts could be more appropriate than those which the apostle recommended ; and what sight can be conceived of more lovely than that of three thousand persons, who only a few hours ago were the avowed and determined enemies of Jesus Christ and his cause, now willing to abandon all their former affections and lusts, all their old companions and pursuits, and to select holy associates, holy practices, and holy pursuits for time and for eternity ? Blessed be the gospel which can produce such results, doubly blessed the men who publish it to mankind, and thrice blessed the Holy Spirit, by whose influence, immediately exerted on the mind, that gospel is made effectual for the accomplishment of its high purpose.

It is one grand excellence of Christianity that every part of it is adapted for *universality*. It has no doctrine, nor duty, nor ordinance, but what can be practically regarded in every part of the world. This shows both the simplicity and the import-

ance of Divine appointments or ordinances. We have now before our imagination the noble band of Christian inquirers numbered by thousands; they only need, whatever may be the varying features of their character, but one answer; all require the same infinite Saviour, all must be interested in his friendship by the same medium, and all must give the same evidence of attachment to him, by obeying the same holy command.

And how enviable was just now the feelings and the position of the apostles of Jesus, and probably also of some of the evangelists whom he had sent forth into the ministry! All idea of opposition to them or their message is for the time forgotten, and hundreds are assembling around each of these ministers of Jesus, hanging with intense interest on their lips, and ready to do their bidding. These hearers are eagerly desirous of a full knowledge of Christ, are anxious to show the depth of their sorrow on account of their rebellion against him, and above all, wish to know in what way they may put off their past character, and show their allegiance to him whom they now see that God has appointed king in his

church. All their Jewish prejudices are gone. With what readiness do they hasten to the large public pools in different parts of the city, there to be solemnly buried in the name of the Holy Three, professing their death to sin and to the world, and their resurrection to holiness and to heaven. It would indeed be profitable to imagine their feelings, and to think of the joy thus created in the heavenly world, and in the hearts of the apostles, the first ministers of Jesus, by these events.

Nor might it be less profitable to think of the lively interest thus excited in every part of that vast city by these proceedings. Baptism would, on that lovely summer's day, be witnessed by numerous spectators. The candidates might have been supposed to be the very last that would believe the apostolic doctrine, or submit their hearts to the government of the crucified Nazarene. What a stir would be created, what inquiries would be made, and what thoughtfulness would lodge in many hearts, thus proving like seed, producing a future harvest!

What would be the feelings and what the

conduct of these three thousand new converts to Jesus, just baptized in his name, when they met together that same evening? As each one looked around on the rest what surprise, what delight, what holy gratitude would fill every bosom as each saw a child, a parent, a friend, unexpectedly numbered among the happy throng! "And is it possible, that is my child?" asks that hoary-headed man, "and has he too, as well as his aged father, yielded to Messiah? Blessed be the Lord, and let the Rock of my salvation be exalted!" "And can that be my dearest daughter?" asks yonder venerable matron. "How could she, far from me at the other end of the city, hear these glad tidings, and by what means was she led to submit to this new ordinance?" "Sister, dear sister," asks that blooming, beautiful young female, "are not that happy pair on yonder side of the house our dearly beloved parents; and can they also have submitted to the yoke of Jesus? O the wonders effected by this new, supernatural, overwhelming influence!" But most interesting of all the instances of sovereign grace here displayed, would be the meeting of the im-

mediate murderers of the Messiah after their conversion. What must have been their feelings as they looked each on the other, and remembered their former malignity, and thought of the infinite grace which they had received! What exalted views had they now of the dignity and the mercy of Jesus! And in what animated terms would each describe the lessons he had received from the Holy Spirit! Truly the blood of Jesus was on them and their children, but in a very far different sense to that which they meant in their former awful imprecations. Such scenes, no doubt, occurred by hundreds, exciting holy joy and gratitude for the present, and interesting conversation and devout admiration for many future days.

But the special occasion of that evening's meeting was not so much to experience joy in the salvation extended to themselves or their friends, as to covenant together in one holy brotherhood to promote the glory of the despised and crucified Nazarene, to them "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." One, to whom they owed all their honor and joy. They wil-

lingly gave themselves to him and to each other according to his will, and by the most solemn surrender of all they were to him, sealing the engagement by receiving the emblems of his body and his blood at his own table. Little did the disciples imagine a few weeks before, when their Lord and Master instituted this memorial of his love, that so soon his command would be obeyed by multitudes, and that thousands in the city of Jerusalem itself would thus surround the hallowed table. What a thought ! These three thousand persons, some of whom were actually murderers of Jesus Christ, and all of them virtually so, are now pledged before high Heaven henceforth not to live to themselves, but to him who loved them and gave himself even to death for their salvation. We can almost hear them anticipating the language of a sweet modern poet :

Forgotten be each worldly theme
When Christians meet together thus,
We only wish to speak of him
Who lived, and died, and reigns for us.
We'll talk of all he did and said,
And all he suffered here below ;
The path he marked for us to tread,
And what he's doing for us now !

Here then was the first Christian church. It was composed of those who had received the truth concerning Jesus, had placed their whole trust for salvation on his atoning sacrifice, had been baptized as a token of their submission to his authority, and as a pledge to each other and to the world, to live only to glorify Messiah. Happy, happy company of baptized believers! Often may I study your character and conduct that my own may partake of a high and holy influence.

Nor is it unimportant to remark that the results of this remarkable day were as lasting as they were striking. The change they had undergone was not brought about by any artful representation appealing only to the passions, inducing them only to adopt opinions which upon calm reflection they would abandon. Their hearts had been affected, their natures changed, and their religion had become identified with their very being. They never regretted the step they had taken; but enlarged acquaintance with the character of Christ, the nature of his service, the design of his church, and the happiness of his people, bound them

closer and still closer to him. Persecution in all its forms followed them, and death in its most terrible shapes tempted them to abandon Christ and his church, but they remained firm; as he forsook not them, neither did they desert him, but followed him through all the trials of life, and then passed through the gates of death to enjoy with him the infinite blessings of immortality.

Neither did their aims and their hopes end here. They felt that the design of the formation of the Christian church was the restoration of a lost world. They had been "baptized into Christ," and had identified themselves with all his purposes of mercy to the world. As they gave themselves to Jesus, so they reckoned that all their possessions must, if need be, be devoted to his service and his church. They were resolved on making a holy impression on the world, and they succeeded. It was not done, however, by any noisy declamation, or violent efforts. Their's was the eloquence of holiness, of peace, and of love. The inhabitants of the whole city were most favorably impressed, and the happy effect soon travelled

to the different nations of the world ; nor is the whole result even yet developed. Men shall ever praise God for what his grace accomplished at the commencement of the Christian church.

The scenes of Pentecost are, so far at least as relates to the enjoyment of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to be repeated. The ministers of Jesus will again be clothed with power from on high, multitudes of sinners will inquire the way of salvation, thousands shall at once dedicate themselves to Christ in his holy ordinance of baptism, and shall, in their turn, make him known to multitudes of others, who shall prove "obedient to the faith;" and thus "the whole earth shall be filled with his glory."

Who, as they read of the baptism of these converts at Jerusalem at the holy Pentecost, will not address the exalted Redeemer :—

Continue still to shine,
And fill us with thy fire :
The ordinance is thine ;
Do thou our souls inspire.
Thou wilt attend
On all thy sons :
"Till time shall end,"
The promise runs.

THE BELIEVING SAMARITANS.

ACTS VIII. 5-25.

Down to the hallowed grave we go,
Obedient to his word ;
And thus the world around shall know
We're buried with the Lord.

IT would be difficult to overvalue the portion of the New Testament called "the Acts of the Apostles." It is beyond all price as an inspired history of the Christian church for nearly the first forty years of its existence. We learn from it how the apostles of the Redeemer understood his high commission, and the spirit and manner in which they acted upon it. We see the operations of the Holy Spirit, and their mighty results on the church and the world. We are compelled to admire the character and the power of the gospel, and are filled with admiration as we behold its influence on the happiness of mankind.

Nor are we less forcibly impressed with

the fact that the Great Head of the church, then, as now, made every thing contribute to its welfare and extension. Like the moon, the cause of Christianity may seem to wax and wane, but really, like the sun, it "shines more and more to the perfect day." The conversions of Pentecost produced in a delighted circle the days of heaven on earth; but dark clouds succeeded, and gloomy fears were excited. The spirit of persecution was roused, and Stephen, one of the most illustrious members of the church at Jerusalem, was stoned to death. A feeling of most determined opposition against the new cause prevailed among the most influential classes of society, and the vast body of Christian believers were compelled to leave the city, and scatter themselves over the neighboring provinces. But such is the infinite wisdom of Him who had promised to remain with his servants, that the cause did not suffer; for these scattered Christians went every where to extend, by their holy lives and zealous labors, the truth they had espoused; and their great Master "caused them to triumph in every place."

Among other results of this violent oppo-

sition, Philip, a man "full of the Holy Ghost," one of the first deacons of the church at Jerusalem, and afterwards a recognized Evangelist, or assistant of the apostles, went to the city of Samaria and preached the gospel there. As there were some instructive peculiarities attending his visit, as happy effects followed it, and as Samaria henceforth became the seat of the second Christian church established on earth, it may be important to look at this event particularly. The term Samaria is sometimes used to describe a province of about one third portion of the Holy Land, between Judea and Galilee, remarkable for its fertility, which it still retains; but very frequently it means only a city, the capital of the province, and indeed of the ten tribes of Israel, after their revolt from Rehoboam. It was situated about forty miles north of Jerusalem; at the time of which we are now writing its inhabitants consisted partly of heathens, and partly of apostate Jews, chiefly the latter. The city had been rebuilt by Herod the Great, who called it *Sebaste*, but it was more generally designated by its former name; their temple stood on Mount

Gerizim, in opposition to the Jewish one on Mount Moriah; in this they read the five books of Moses, which, however, were corrupted, and here they offered sacrifices; lamentably blending the superstitions of the surrounding countries with the truths of God. Between the Samaritans and the Jews there existed a most malignant enmity, which prevented all intercourse even when life itself was in danger. In the very first stage of his ministry, the Lord Jesus visited it, and published the gospel with success in and about one of its cities, but afterwards, for a while, prohibited his disciples from going there.

It will be easily seen that there was nothing in the religion of these Samaritans which presented encouragement to introduce the gospel among them, and certainly their morals were not more attractive than their theology. And yet, as Mr. Townsend has said, there is a remarkable coincidence in the three most memorable events occurring in Samaria. Here the first proselytes were admitted into the church of Israel (Gen. xxxiv. 29; xxxv. 2); here Christ first announced himself to be the Messiah (John

iv. 26); and here the gospel was first preached out of Jerusalem after the ascension of Jesus Christ. Dr. Lightfoot is of opinion that here the prophecy of Hosea was literally accomplished, "I will give the valley of Achor for a door of hope;" and assuredly here it was proved that the gospel is equally adapted for all classes of men, and that it is intended to destroy all barriers between one nation and another.

To this city, then, we see Philip, the man of God, travelling to make known the character and the work of Christ. This was the one topic of his ministry. We can easily suppose with what fidelity, earnestness, and affection, he would present Christ as fulfilling all the types, and giving virtue to all the sacrifices of the old economy. We almost think we hear him insisting on their need of a Saviour from sin and from hell, and urging them to believe his message that Jesus was "mighty to save," and every way qualified to effect reconciliation between God and them. And as he presented the proofs of Christ's Messiahship, he would exhort them to submit to his government, and to obey his requirements. How glo-

rious and how elevating the topics of his ministry, and what a matter for congratulation is it that we have the substance of all he said in the sacred volume; and that all is as suitable to us, and the mercies offered to Samaria as free for our acceptance as for theirs!

In the early period of the church it was important that the preaching of the gospel should be attested by the performance of miracles. Its great Author had thus attracted attention, and compelled multitudes to acknowledge that he came from God; and till Christianity, by its moral triumphs, had obtained a firm position on earth, these miracles were performed by very many of Christ's disciples, and among the rest by Philip. So that we now read of devils being cast out of the possessed, and of various diseases being healed.

We are fully prepared, under these circumstances, to hear of the existence of much excitement and of manifold remarks and inquiries; but the inspired writer goes farther than to speak of this, for he tells us "there was great joy in the city." Seasons of religious joy have always been distin-

guished by some deeply interesting and extraordinary event. So in the preparation for the building of the temple and at its dedication; at Hezekiah's passover; the building of the wall of Jerusalem; and especially at the birth of Messiah. Now all the inhabitants of Samaria are collected together to hear evidence of the incarnation of Messiah, and the blessings he had brought to earth. They had proof, too, in the preaching of Philip, and in the miracles he performed, that the system of the gospel was one of pure benevolence. Moreover, they would have their joy enhanced as they felt in themselves and saw in others that this truth changed the hearts and the characters of individuals, who yielded to its evidence and resigned themselves to its government. Nor can we suppose that the woman who several years before, with not a few of her neighbors, who also had heard Jesus preach at Jacob's well, would be backward in declaring the happy effects of the gospel in promoting social as well as individual happiness. All these grounds, and others, existed to give joy to the Samaritans on this happy occasion. It is delight-

ful to observe the entire freedom of these intelligent citizens from the modern heresy that the tendency of the gospel is to produce gloom and melancholy. If it were really so, it would indeed form an argument for its rejection, seeing that an infinitely happy and benevolent Being must needs desire the happiness of his creatures. But no wise man,—no man “knowing the Scriptures,” ever formed such an opinion. Those who have best understood the subject, have most thoroughly rejoiced in the publication of the gospel; because they have very properly identified its truths and its requirements with the highest welfare of individuals and of communities.

It would indeed be a delightful task, if it were possible entirely to effect it, to trace all the happy results of the introduction of the gospel into a community. It would be seen to be the only foundation of good government, the only guardian of true freedom, the only parent, in a word, of the civilization which humanizes the heart as well as polishes the manners. No genuine liberty has ever yet been found in a country till the seeds of Christianity have produced

it. The blessings of temporal good, both to individuals and to nations, are scattered by the angel of truth on her road as our guide to the still higher enjoyments of immortality.

The joy of these Samaritans was of the highest character. It arose from their reception of "the truth as in Jesus." They fully believed the fact of their sinfulness in the sight of God, and while they mourned over sin, and felt their utter helplessness to deliver themselves from its curse, they rejoiced in the salvation of the Lord Jesus as exactly meeting their exigences. They implicitly received the Divine testimony concerning Christ, and committed their highest interests into his hands, looking for his mercy, even to eternal life. In a word, they became Christians,—new creatures,—the flock of Messiah's pasture, the willing subjects of his government.

Few things can be more evident than that the first preachers of Christianity insisted in every sermon they preached, on the importance of obeying Messiah, the king of his church, in his holy ordinance of baptism. How otherwise could these Samari-

tans, for instance, the Eunuch, or the Jailer, or Lydia, have been so prompt on their first listening to the gospel thus to be baptized? The nature of baptism will show us the propriety of this arrangement. It is the barrier which separates the followers of Christ from the men of the world,—the badge of discipleship,—the profession of death and burial to the world—the declaration of allegiance to a new governor. Jesus Christ very wisely requires that his people should thus act, and it can never be too soon for a believer in his name to leave the world, and to unite with his church. The first believers, soon as they believed, furnished at once decided evidences of their sincere attachment to the Holy Redeemer, and as readily did his ministers receive them to their confidence and fellowship

So it was here. When these Samaritans believed the doctrines of Philip concerning Messiah, his claims and his kingdom, and the importance of making him known to others also, “they were baptized, both men and women.” We see that the persons who thus acted were capable of solemn thought, of prayerful deliberation, and of careful as

well as prompt decision. This is the first time we hear of women thus submitting to the law of baptism, though, no doubt, many were included in the thousands converted on the day of Pentecost. Here they are expressly mentioned that Gentiles as well as Jews might see that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female—but all are one; and that in no future age any mistake might prevail as to the persons who should enjoy the privileges of the church of Christ. We contemplate the scene with holy pleasure, and long for the happy period, which must assuredly come, when scenes like this at Samaria, shall, in different parts of our fallen world, be repeated.

But nothing on earth is perfect, not even the church. It had long been the unhappiness of Samaria to have in it a wicked man and awfully erroneous teacher, named Simon, a magician, or sorcerer, who had obtained by his wicked arts a very extensive influence. This man had heard Philip preach, and had witnessed the number and the character of his miracles; he had seen the extensive reception of the gospel in the city, and either deceived himself by suppos-

ing Philip to be a magician, though of a higher order than himself, or wishing to deceive others and make them his dupes again hereafter, Simon also professed to believe the gospel, and on that profession of faith was baptized and added to the number of the faithful. Thus do we see that we can never expect that the church, while in a wicked world, will be entirely free from hypocrites. Ever will Jehovah have to say, "Among my people are found wicked men."

It is impossible for the church of Christ to be indifferent to the progress of the gospel, or to the improvement and happiness of young converts. Hence as soon as the apostles at Jerusalem had heard of the recent pleasing events in Samaria, they proposed to Peter and John to pay a visit there to aid the brethren in their labors and joy. They would not assume improper authority over their fellow servants, but would be ready to give them help. They came, and prayed that "they might receive the Holy Ghost," by which we understand that they implored for them his ordinary influence to instruct, to comfort and to sanctify them,

and that his extraordinary or miraculous influence might be afforded to assist them in the advancement of the cause of Christ, by the performance of miracles. Prayer was answered, and by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, a significant act performed on great occasions in both the Jewish and Christian churches, the donation was given to some of them.

This laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Ghost by such means, proved the test by which the real character of Simon was made apparent. Seeing that others had this favor, but that he had been omitted, he offered to Peter money for the gift and for power to impart it to others; but the apostle, with the usual boldness of his character, and with a holy indignation becoming his Christian profession, spurned the proposal, and told the sorcerer that his "heart was not right in the sight of God." He had no hatred to sin,—no love to holiness,—no attachment to Jesus,—no purity of motive in his Christian profession, but was governed in his conduct by selfish and sinful principles. The apostle exhorted him to repentance and prayer; these duties he

seems to have had no relish for ; but asking the apostle to pray for him, he appears to have gone back to his former sins ; and if ecclesiastical history is to be credited, lived to curse the world by his crimes, and died in all the horrors of despair ; showing that the most solemn professions of religion may be made by the very worst of men.

There is something unutterably solemn in the thought that bad men, having once professed religion, on going back to the paths of sin, become worse than before, and commit greater injuries to society. Such facts prove that the influences of the Holy Spirit alone can maintain true religion in the heart and life, and that the power of Satan is greatest over those who have professedly deserted his standard and then returned to it. Christians cannot be too thankful for the grace which enables them to walk in the ways of God without reproach.

Happily for themselves and for others, the great body of baptized Christians in Samaria steadfastly continued in the truth of the gospel. No doubt that the separation of such a man as Simon would do them much good, both in the destruction of his

moral influence, and in deeply impressing their minds with the high Christian dignity of the apostles. These holy men for a season "testified and preached the word of the Lord," a blessing, especially in the then circumstances of the Samaritan church, of incalculable value; after which they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel on their route "in many villages of the Samaritans;" thus furnishing practical proof that while they considered great cities to have the first claim to the gospel, yet that rural populations must not be neglected. The gospel, with its ordinances, will be found adapted to man in every condition and place, and therefore it must be preached "to every creature."

The narrative thus viewed, may well lead us to admire the simplicity and power of the gospel; it teaches us that all Christians should take the truth relating to Christ and make it known, go wherever they may; and moreover it shows us that though hypocrites may be found in the church, the truth will detect their sins, and their expulsion will attest the love of Christians for purity. Christian ministers, too, may see how they

should tremble over the impenitent, reprove them for sin, and exhort them to duty. And finally, baptized Christians should feel how prominent a position they occupy in society, and how solemn and weighty their responsibility! Let them ever pray—

While thee, our Saviour and our God
To all around we own ;
Drive each rebellious rival lust,
Each traitor from thy throne.

THE ETHIOPIAN TREASURER.

ACTS VIII. 26-40.

Is that most glorious Saviour mine,
Of whom I lately read !
Who, bearing all my sins and griefs,
Was numbered with the dead !

Blest pool in which I lately lay
And left my fears behind ;
What an unworthy worm am I,
And God profusely kind !

BEEDOME.

THE Gospel is eminently adapted to man. It is a great mistake to suppose that it is meant only or principally for the poor. When the Messiah laid a stress on the fact "the poor have the gospel preached to them," he meant to assert the disinterestedness of the evangelical system and its preachers, and to show that, unlike heathenism, it did not confine itself to the higher classes of society, but was equally fitted for all, and was therefore to be published to the whole world. As all men are

sinner, so all need the exercise of the same mercy. At the throne of God the rich and the poor must meet on equal terms. And while, perhaps, the mercy of Christ most gloriously shines in the salvation of the poor, the power of the gospel is most eminently manifested in the lives of the rich. Those in exalted stations rejoice as much in being "made low" in their approaches to God, as the brother of low degree rejoices "in that he is exalted." Each moves in his own circle, and glorifies the Being who has brought him to glory and joy.

It is matter of gratitude and of encouragement to the faithful minister of Christ, that his Great Master directs all his movements. He that sitteth amidst the golden candlesticks, disposes of the lesser lights as seemeth good in his sight. We often meet in the New Testament with clear illustrations of this fact. On one occasion we find "the Spirit hindered" an apostle, when he would have visited a district to publish the gospel; on another, when Paul would have left Corinth, he was instructed by Jehovah to remain where he was, "For," said the Lord, "I have much people in

this city." And so in the instance before us, Philip was directed by a message from heaven to visit a desert near Gaza. The eminent Charles Wesley beautifully writes :

Jesus instructs his servants here,
Detached from persons and from place,
Their providential course to steer,
And follow Him in all their ways :
To whom they shall dispense the word,
Or when or where extend their line,
They leave entirely to their Lord,
And still adore the choice divine.

Thy providence explains thy will ;
And when the pointing hand we see,
We run thy counsel to fulfil,
And spread the work prepared by thee :
Spreading the odors of thy love,
In journeys we pursue thy plan
Directed by thy Spirit move,
Nor take a single step in vain.

The object which the Great Master of Philip had in view in thus directing his servant to what might appear a very unpromising scene of action, was, that he might discharge the duties of the ministry to an individual of high rank, connected with the government of Ethiopia, an adjacent country of Abyssinia, between Egypt and Nubia.

Its seat of government was called by the Greeks *Merœe*, and is supposed to correspond with the present province of Atbara; its sovereigns were always females, and bore the general title of Candace, as did the male sovereigns of Egypt that of Pharaoh. It is generally thought that a form of corrupted Judaism was the prevalent religion of the country; or it might be that the illustrious individual of whom we are writing was a proselyte to the Jewish religion. It is evident that he was not considered as one of the gentiles, because, notwithstanding his conversion, they are not spoken of as being called till Peter afterwards preached to the household of Cornelius. The inhabitants of the country themselves represent that the queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon, reigned over them; and that having embraced the religion of that monarch, she introduced it into her dominions, and that it continued to be professed till the nation was converted to Christianity. The existence of several Jewish customs among the people seems to confirm this representation. There is much both of interest and of instruction in reflecting on the sacrifices.

made by the worshippers of God in ancient times to appear in his temple. Three times in each year was it the appointment of Jehovah that the adult males should assemble in his holy house at Jerusalem. This man, whose name, Kuinöel, and after him Townsend, think there is evidence to show, was *Indich*, was of great rank, being the treasurer of the queen, and of course ranking high in authority. It is highly gratifying that his zeal and devotion were equal to his political elevation, and that he allowed no affairs of state, nor the hundreds of miles distance from Jerusalem, through sandy deserts, to prevent his appearance in the solemn assembly. The law was especially binding on the inhabitants of Palestine, but this man, and many others, were unwilling to neglect the high privilege conferred upon them.

It would appear highly probable that while at Jerusalem the Treasurer might have heard not a little about Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one. It was scarcely possible, amidst the excitement which his apostles had created, that the mass of the Jewish nation should ever assemble without

talking much on the subject; and it is not impossible that the attention of Indich might thus have been directed to the whole subject of Messiahship, including the character and the work of that great Deliverer. At all events, we are highly pleased with the description that is here given us of the manner in which the time of this great officer of state was employed as he returns home. He had visited Jerusalem to worship Jehovah, and as he again travels towards home he forms no schemes of ambition and pleasure; he occupies not his time in the survey of the scenery, beautiful as it was; but his attention is fixed on the book of God, the fountain of light, and the source of wisdom. The version of the Scriptures seems to have been the Septuagint, the exact portion the fifty-third chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah, and the particular passage one having direct reference to the sufferings of some exalted personage, which, though not very correctly translated, had enough of truth in it to arrest his attention and to affect his heart.

Whenever we are intent on ascertaining the will of God, and are desirous of under-

standing his word, He will provide the means by which our wishes shall be gratified. Philip had been directed by the Holy Spirit to this spot, and had promptly obeyed his instructions ; no other object now attracts his attention than this travelling officer of state, and no other suggestion presents itself to his mind than that he should introduce himself to the illustrious stranger. We see here very evidently the hand of God ; the preacher has no hesitation, no false delicacy, no trembling timidity ; but advances ; no doubt, with courteous manners, and proposes to the distinguished officer what would appear to us an insulting question, " Understandest thou what thou readest ? " and the treasurer, with the bland simplicity which we should expect from him, answers, " How can I, except some man should guide me ? " The answer manifests much that was amiable and humble ; he boasts of no superiority of learning, but frankly admits his ignorance, and perceiving that Philip was a Jew, and probably impressed with the fact that he had a better understanding of this whole subject than himself, he invited the traveller on foot to take a seat in his chariot. How

beautiful an illustration have we here of the harmony between the Divine arrangements and the feelings of good men. Philip had been sent by the blessed God to instruct the Ethiopian statesman in heavenly truth ; and the dweller in a court, not at the moment aware of the fact, shows himself willing "to do according to the good pleasure of God." So in all things, men are *led* into the truth, not *driven* into it.

Beautifully has an inspired writer said, "The lips of the righteous shall feed many;" and strikingly was this truth illustrated in the narrative before us. Philip now commenced a conversation with this Ethiopian treasurer, the happy effects of which were realized by thousands, and are still felt. He was at no loss for a subject of discourse, for the passage which now occupied the attention of Indich had a reference to the Messiah ; to whom at once Philip applied it, showing how entirely all had been accomplished in the sufferings and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Who can describe, however, the feelings either of the preacher or of the hearer ? With what delight would Philip speak of the subject ever nearest his

heart, and to the extension of which he had devoted his life! "He began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." It was his favorite theme, the source of his present happiness and of his future hopes. He showed that the prophet speaks neither of himself nor of any other mere man, but of the Messiah; that although his reign was described in splendid imagery, he was to suffer before he entered into his glory; and that he who died on the cross, rose from the grave, and was now exalted "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." Nor was the hearer less interested in these topics than the preacher. The beautiful simplicity, the infinite importance, and the exact adaptedness of these truths to his own spiritual necessities would arouse his attention and compel him with holy earnestness to inquire into the whole truth of Christ and salvation.

It is always important to remember that it is the word of truth which is God's instrument in the regeneration of sinners. It is the testimony of God concerning his Son which Philip brings before the Ethiopian treasurer, and to which he listens with un-

tiring and devout attention ; it is this which enlightens his understanding, so that no doubt as to its truth, no objection to its requirements remains. The Spirit of God so works with this instrumentality, that Indich with devout humility yields his heart to its influence, and blesses God for the high privilege he enjoys in listening to his word.

We have already remarked that the primitive preachers of Christianity always taught the importance of a full and entire submission to all the requirements and institutions of Christ. We may suppose, too, that in the instance before us, in addition to his usual explanations of the rite and design of baptism, the evangelist would tell him of the obedience of the Pentecostal converts to the command, and of the still more recent conduct of the believers in Samaria. The illustrious traveller at once saw the importance of the duty, and felt desirous of yielding obedience to this and every other command of his adorable Redeemer.

The great importance of obeying the commands of Christ should be so felt as to lead to holy promptitude, that so the ser-

vant may say to his Lord, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." So felt this recent but earnest convert. He was anxious to show his love to Christ, to be numbered with his followers, to enjoy all the privileges and to discharge all the duties of a believer in Jesus. Hence, as in the progress of their journey, "they came unto a certain water," a river or pool, he said to his instructor, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" What decision marks the character of this statesman; how desirous is he to acknowledge the greatness of Jesus, and to yield to his authority! Yet withal there is much of modesty in his language; while he desires to obey Christ, he does not demand the administration of the ordinance as a right, but willingly defers to the judgment of Philip as to his enjoyment of so high a privilege.

The conduct of the evangelist on this occasion was in accordance with the infallible influence he enjoyed, and is well worthy of our imitation. On the one hand, he was desirous that Jesus should be honored by all his people, and on the other he was con-

cerned that none but believers should enjoy the believer's privilege. Nothing but faith in Christ was necessary in order to baptism, but this faith was an indispensable requisite. He had lately been deceived in Samaria in relation to Simon, and he had now become cautious as to whom he received into the number of the followers of the Lamb. "If thou believest," said he to Indich, "with all thine heart, thou mayest." He required the belief of the Divine testimony concerning Jesus, and the submission of the heart to him. The reply of the treasurer was equally prompt and satisfactory, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God;" a phrase assuredly importing his conviction of the Messiahship of Jesus, his divine nature as One with Jehovah, and his claim to entire allegiance and obedience on the part of his followers. This confession was exceedingly simple, and could not then be misunderstood. The position of the man who professed this faith, and the sacrifices he would be called to make as the result of it, demonstrated its sincerity, and showed to Philip that no necessity existed for another moment's delay.

Now then we are called to witness the most important and the most interesting scene in the life of this illustrious nobleman and officer of state. "He commanded the chariot to stand still." His attendants are collected together, he solemnly professes faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the Saviour of sinners, he avows his desire to dedicate himself entirely and for ever to his service. Then "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." He is buried beneath the yielding waters, a pledge of his death unto sin and his new birth unto righteousness. Honored believer in Jesus! The offering of thy heart and life is accepted in heaven; the scene we contemplate was a source of delight to the saints and angels before the throne of Jehovah, and this which thou hast done shall be told as a memorial of thee, to influence the conduct of other believers in Jesus even till the end of time. We rejoice in the exceeding simplicity and in the delightful character of gospel ordinances; we are grateful for the minute details with which we are here furnished of Christian duty; and fervently would we

pray and labor to "walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless."

We almost seem to wish that the historian here had given us a view of the attendants on this delightful service, and of their views and feelings. We cannot forbear, in the absence of such a description, to imagine their emotions of surprise and of intense interest as the cause of this delay unfolded itself in the address of Philip, and perhaps also of Indich. How new, how important, how solemn the whole proceedings! They would never forget the circumstances, or the feelings inspired; and with indescribable sentiments would they, in every circle, on their return home, represent the whole solemnity, and thus would add to the excitement which their illustrious master and his conduct would create.

The dealings of God with his people are often opposed to their wishes, and apparently in the first instance to their interests. Had the Ethiopian Treasurer been now asked what he most of all desired, his answer would probably have been the continued society and instructions of Philip. But

scarcely had they come up out of the water where the solemn rite of dedication to God had taken place, but the teacher was suddenly, probably *miraculously*, separated from his disciple. But herein was the wisdom of God manifested; for the convert was to be taught the sustaining character of the religion he had embraced,—he was led more directly to the Saviour in whom he had so recently begun to trust, and the sanction of the miracle by which Philip had been taken away, in connection with the extraordinary manner in which they had first become acquainted, would never suffer him to doubt the reality of the truths he had received. The inspired writer adds in reference to this new Christian that “he went on his way rejoicing.” How could it be otherwise? He had become acquainted with the most “joyful sound” which ever arrested the attention of man,—the glad tidings of eternal life and mercy; he had received the pardon of his sins, through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God; he had devoted himself to the service of Christ, entering into a perpetual and never-to-be-forgotten covenant with him; he

was going home to publish among his kindred and countrymen salvation by the cross of Christ; and he expected that after serving Jesus on earth, he should, by sovereign grace, be raised to the throne of Christ in heaven. Could it, then, be matter of surprise that he should go "on his way rejoicing?" He resembled Krishnu, a baptized Hindoo, who, on the day of his baptism, said he was "full of joy;" and when, shortly after, asked by an European in the street what he got by his profession of Christianity, replied, that, "He got nothing but joy and comfort," adding, "it was the work of love."

As an illustration of the importance of the baptism of this courtier, we may add, on the authority of Dr. Kitto, in his excellent Pictorial Bible, "Traditions state that this 'eunuch,' preached the gospel in his own country, after his return; and that the queen was the first whom he baptized; that he afterwards went to proclaim the glad tidings in the neighboring part of Abyssinia, in Arabia Felix, and in Ceylon; and at last suffered martyrdom. It is observable that the Abyssinians allege that the province of Tigre, the part of their country

nearest Meröe, was converted by the preaching of this 'eunuch,' although the nation at large did not receive the gospel until a later day."

In reference to Philip it is only necessary to add, that having discharged his duty to Indich, and being removed by "the Spirit of the Lord" from this scene of action, he travelled from city to city, preaching the gospel of Christ, till he arrived at Cesarea, where he continued to reside, faithful to the cause of his Great Master

It is pleasing to learn, from the whole view of this subject, that the religion of the gospel and its privileges are not confined to any one class of men, but that the great and noble, as well as the poor, may be brought under its influence;—that all true piety is founded on the knowledge of the Scriptures; that God is at no loss in providing instructors for those who fear him;—that we should be encouraged to speak for God and his truth to all persons, and in all places;—that true piety will always tend to the prompt obedience of the law of God;—and that the results of our religion will

act on the world as long as it shall continue to exist. Let us, then, ever say :—

Jesus, mighty King in Zion,
Thou alone our guide shalt be :
Thy commission we rely on ;
We would follow none but thee.

SAUL OF TARSUS.

ACTS IX.

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow Thee :
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be.
Perish, every fond ambition,
All I've sought, and hoped, and known ;
Yet how rich is my condition,—
God and heaven are still my own.

LITE.

HISTORY, sacred or profane, scarcely records the name of a more remarkable man than Saul, or as he afterwards called himself *Paul*, probably in compliment to one of his converts, Sergius Paulus, a proconsul of Cyprus, who appears to have been his first gentile convert. Or possibly, as he was a Roman citizen, and emphatically the "apostle to the Gentiles," he would adopt a Roman name, rather than continue his Jewish one. He was a native of Tarsus, a city of Asia Minor, the capital of Cilicia ; which was made free by Augustus, the Roman

emperor; and so distinguished by its literature and the residence of learned men in it, as to be classed with Athens and Alexandria. The parents of Paul were both of the Jewish nation, his father being of the tribe of Benjamin, speaking the Hebrew language, and rigidly conforming to the Mosaic ritual. As no expense was spared in his education, we may infer that his family was in comfortable if not opulent circumstances; a supposition by no means rendered the less probable by the fact that he acquired the art of tent-making, as the most wealthy among the Jews taught their sons some such method of obtaining, in case of future necessity, a livelihood. Saul was distinguished by eminent talents, having a powerful intellect, and clear understanding; and though we are not prepared to show that he was an eminent proficient in the rhetoric and philosophy of the Greeks, there can be no doubt of his high attainments in all Jewish literature and theology. His principal instructor in all this was Gamaliel, an eminent Jewish doctor, whose residence was at Jerusalem, the seat of theological wisdom.

Saul is first introduced to us at the age of somewhat more than thirty years. Small in stature, yet ardent in disposition, he was energetic in his whole conduct. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, filled with wrath against Stephen, an eminently zealous disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, resolved on putting him to death, and dragged him out of the city for this purpose. It is here we first meet with Saul guarding the clothes of those who stoned the holy martyr to death. The hatred of Saul to the author of Christianity, to the system itself, and to all who adhered to it, was inveterate, and he was resolved to use every energy he possessed to extirpate the very name of Jesus from the earth. Never did any man display more determined decision of character. Little could any one then have supposed that this young man would hereafter diffuse over a considerable part of the world the faith he now labored to destroy; and that in life and death his whole ardor would be consecrated to the service and glory of the crucified Nazarene.

The religious influence of the Jewish Sanhedrim at Jerusalem extended over their

own people all over the world; the Roman authorities seldom interfering with their arrangements. At this time the office of the high priest was filled by Theophilus, the son of Ananus, who a few years before had been appointed to succeed his deposed brother. To this exalted personage our ardent hero, bent on personal distinction in the work of destroying the newly risen sect, repaired, with an earnest entreaty that he might be intrusted with a commission to place in prison, or to bring to Jerusalem, as the circumstances should warrant, both men and women who might be found adhering to the new and hated system. The particular scene to which he wished to transfer his zealous efforts, was the city of Damascus in Coele-Syria, on the river Chrysorrhoeas, or Barradi, about one hundred and fifty miles north-east of Jerusalem. Damascus was a city of great beauty, whose large population furnished a goodly number of followers of Jesus of Nazareth. It is now called Damascus, or Damesch, and sometimes Schams. It had been more than once the scene of great slaughter among the Jews, and now presented the prospect of success to Saul;

as besides the fact that very many Jews lived there, who would, of course, co-operate with him in his object, Aretas, the governor, if not a proselyte to the Jewish religion was at least disposed to show favor to that people. Alas, that a young man like Saul, with talents, learning, and zeal so distinguished, should thus prostitute his powers to deeds of cruelty and bloodshed! How far removed was his conduct from humanity and religion! All he did was done in the sacred name of religion, and in obedience to the dictates of conscience. What awful mischief has been done in these sacred names of conscience and religion. When, O when will men learn that conscience is only a safe rule of action when it is enlightened by revelation from heaven! Saul verily thought that by the conduct he now pursued he was glorifying God, but who will pretend that he acted rightly?

Many persons, not even a few Christians, are disposed greatly to hesitate as to the belief of the sovereignty of Jehovah, in the conversion of sinners. When we say that the Holy Spirit operates on whom he will, bringing them to the knowledge of Christ

and to submission to his government, these persons heap argument on argument to prove the contrary, and to connect human salvation with human choice; but how will these controversialists reply to facts? Will they contend that the Christianity of Saul, and his love to Jesus Christ originated with himself; or was it the natural and unavoidable result of moral suasion, or of cool deliberate reasoning? Let us briefly examine the facts of the case.

The zealous persecutor of Christ and his church has set out with his companions to Damascus. Near to this city, at the hour of noon, the attention of Saul and his companions is arrested by a light incomparably brighter than that of the sun itself, so bright indeed as to afflict Saul with *gutta serena*,—temporary blindness. Accompanying this light, was an articulate voice, addressed to Saul, but which was not distinctly heard by his attendants. What means this? Here is indeed a scene worthy of our contemplation. It is none other than the appearance of the ascended Jesus, the glorified Messiah, to Saul. More than three years before this had Messiah commanded his apostles to

publish his gospel among all nations, but his commission had been neglected; and now he would silently reprove his servants by taking the greatest enemy he had on earth, and converting him into "the apostle of the Gentiles." Besides, Jesus would thus show the sovereignty and the power of his love; and would encourage the vilest sinners of all future ages to hope in his mercy; and give encouragement to his people to seek the salvation of the vilest of men.

Yes, here is indeed an important and interesting interview between Jesus and his most inveterate enemy. The gracious Redeemer has seen the sufferings of his people, has heard their prayers, and has come down to deliver them: he is about to claim the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; and here is the agent whom he resolves to qualify, that he may accomplish no small share of the work. His heart, too, overflows with holy love to the guilty, and he will show that love in the renewal, in the ministry, and in the eternal glory of this greatest of sinners.

What Christian has not a thousand times

admired the pity and compassion of his Lord? The Christians, of that day especially, were regarded by men as the offscouring of all things, as the most degraded of all beings, but infinite wisdom and love identified them with Christ himself. How tender the language of the Redeemer, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And when the persecutor would make himself sure as to who now addressed him, the answer is, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Had Saul then really seen Jesus on earth? We think not. Had his malice and his opposition to him reached the throne of Christ in heaven? Impossible. No, but saith the Redeemer to his people "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye;" and to his enemies, when speaking of their treatment of his disciples, "inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." So here, Saul, in his persecution of Christians, was really persecuting Jesus himself. And thus doth Jesus regard it. Where is the Christian who will not more gratefully rejoice than heretofore in the fact that Christ thus indissolubly unites him with himself, and be

practically influenced by the fact alike in his sufferings and his labors.

Nor are we less impressed with the manner in which the gracious Saviour speaks to this his bitterest foe. He pours not on him the vials of his wrath, nor addresses to him the thunders of his threatenings. As by his ancient prophet Isaiah he would "reason" with sinners, so now he uses the tender language of expostulation. Rebels against God act in the most unreasonable manner, and when they are once brought to see and to feel the real state of things between him and them, a most important step towards their reconciliation is gained. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" As though he had said, what in my character when on earth,—what in my preaching or conduct,—what in my life or death,—what in my resurrection or present life,—what in the faith or the practice of my followers should call forth thy hot displeasure? "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" thou art but resembling the ox who will not consent to be urged on his way by the goad or iron spike at the end of a pole used by his driver, but resists only to add to his own sufferings;

even so acts the sinner towards the Saviour, who would deliver him from evil and conduct him to his own throne.

How vast the power, how infinite the transforming influence of the grace of Christ! Here is a man who, an hour ago, was vehemently opposed to Jesus, but who is now entirely and cordially submissive to his government. Light from heaven has burst upon his soul; he has now a clear view of the dignity of Messiah; feels the reasonableness of his service, and is, above all things, desirous of obeying his will. How vast the happiness connected with such a state of mind, and with what constancy should we seek to cherish it.

It was scarcely possible that all this should have occurred, and all this glory of Messiah should have been manifested to this persecutor without his being reminded of the martyrdom of the holy Stephen. Had he ever forgotten the angelic appearance of that eminent man as he looked up into heaven; had not the spirit he displayed made on Saul's mind an indelible impression; and could the tones of his prayer for his enemies have even yet ceased from his

ears? Who can tell how closely connected was the prayer of Stephen with the conversion of Saul? It is certain that the enemy of Christ now saw enough of his glory to account for the moral heroism of the martyr. It is equally certain that the recollection of Stephen's death would hereafter encourage him in his trials and his own martyrdom. Nor can we scarcely imagine that this conversation could take place without the knowledge and the grateful joy of the Christian proto-martyr.

In the great work of the conversion and instruction of his people, the Lord Jesus is pleased to act through human agency. When, then, Saul inquires of his Lord what he would have him to do, he does not immediately receive a direct answer, but is instructed to enter the city to which he meant to go as a persecutor, and there to inquire into Christian duty. How different are the ways of man and those of God! but who does not feel as in this case; so always, the plans of God are best? With what feelings of bodily suffering, and of mental anxiety would Saul enter the city! Who can imagine the emotions of himself or of his com-

panions during this walk, or the reasonings which occupied their attention during the three succeeding days?

The arrangements of the Great Head of the church, in connection with the guidance and the happiness of his people, are very different to what we might have expected. Who is not ready to suppose, that now the Redeemer has changed the character of this malignant foe, and has determined to make him an apostle, he would send him at once to the church at Damascus, that in the whole assembly of the disciples he should tell what Jesus had done for him. But his conduct was far different from this. There lived in the city a man no doubt eminent for his piety, but we know little more of him. We hear nothing of his filling an office of any kind in the church, or of his becoming even after this event a prominent person. On him, however, Jesus, who had been pleased with his unobtrusive piety, put the honor of instructing Saul in his duty. Jesus, in a vision, tells Ananias the fact, that the persecutor was already in the city,—but that his character was changed,—and that

he was waiting for the instructions which the holy man was able to give.

We cannot be surprised that Ananias should have a momentary hesitation on this subject. He had often heard of the cruel character of Saul, and an intimation had reached the church that he was now on his way to persecute them even to death! He might fear that Saul's profession was intended to cover his wicked designs. But he soon corrected his wrong impressions, and thought of the ability of Christ to save the worst of sinners; and, hence, we soon see the worthy disciple on his way to Straight Street, to inquire in the house of Judas for Saul of Tarsus, for now "Behold! he prayeth." No apostle was employed on this important mission, but a disciple, of whom no subsequent mention is made; a fact which teaches us that we may be eminently useful in the cause of Christ without filling high offices, and that the glory of success in the Christian church belongs to the Great Master, and not to any of his servants.

And now, we see Ananias and Saul in conversation together. And what a narra-

tive has Saul to give him! What ingenuousness, humility, sorrow, and love, does he exhibit! How entirely is all the doubtfulness of the disciple's mind removed, and how does he rejoice in the conversion and the prospects of Saul! With what holy cordiality does he recognize him as a "brother" in Christ, and what must have been their mutual joy as Saul received his sight, and sat down, after three days' fasting, to partake of food!

But Saul had been sent by Jesus Christ into the city, and had been assured, "it shall be told thee what thou must do." He had not hitherto had a clear sense of duty, either as to faith or practice, but must learn one and the other from his fellow Christians on earth. And what has he to do? "He arose, and was baptized." Three days ago he was intent on the destruction of the followers of Christ, but mark the triumphs of Almighty love! He now abandons his former pursuits, and his former companions. He departs from the world he had loved, embraces the Saviour he had hated, and begins to live only for the advancement of the church he had persecuted.

Would that it were possible for us to narrate all the facts connected with this important and delightful baptism! Who can tell us the feelings of the administrator, or of the penitent baptized persecutor? Who can describe the influence of the fact on the persons who witnessed it? What thought the men composing the retinue of the persecuting commissioner? Did they not come armed to destroy the followers of the Nazarene; and what then means Saul's avowal of faith in the Messiahship of Jesus, and his baptism in his name? And as the intelligence flies over the city, what are the thoughts and what the emotions of the Jews, of the governor, and of the citizens at large? And what, especially, the holy surprise, the grateful delight of the little church, when they heard the intelligence, and especially when they listened to his intensely interesting story, and saw the holy zeal he manifested in preaching Christ in the synagogues, and proving that the crucified Jesus was the Son of God!

"He was baptized."—Having renounced earth, its pleasures, its society, and its engagements, it was meet that he should be

buried, and should come forth to new and higher pursuits. Having begun to believe in Christ, and to serve him, it was right that he should now publicly dedicate himself to his service, and commence that devotedness to his glory which shall exist for eternity. Commencing, as he was about to do, a public ministry for Jesus and his church, calling on sinners to believe and to be baptized, it was every way suitable that his own conduct should harmonize with his future instructions,—that he should do what he called on others to do, thus fully exemplifying the character of Christianity and glorifying its author.

It is surely impossible carefully to read this narrative without recognizing in it the hand of God, and admiring his love. It should encourage us to expect the triumphs of the gospel among even its bitterest opponents; and as we see the ready and cheerful obedience of Paul to the commands of Jesus, we should address our common Lord:

Teach us what we do not know,
Lord instruct us in thy will:
What we learn O may we do,
To thy voice obedient still;
Close to thee may we abide,
Thee, our Saviour, and our Guide.

CORNELIUS AND HIS FRIENDS.

ACTS X.

First fruits of Gentile faith ! to thee
We look with deepest love :
Bright glory streamed upon thy head,
Thou blessed from above !

From thee shall Christian warriors take
The word of high command :
The red-cross banner thou shalt wave
O'er many a darksome land.

To a man who breathes the spirit of the gospel, few things suggest more gratifying topics of contemplation than the expansive character of the blessings of Christianity. While this heavenly system of truth elevates each individual mind, bringing it into contact with holiness and God, and preparing it for heaven, it shows itself adapted to man as such, and as designed to restore the human family to God and to joy. Judaism, divine as it was in its origin, and perfect for the accomplishment of its grand design,

could never have become the religion of the world. Its combined national and congregational worship, its sacrifices, and the feelings it cherished, with the fact that those who practised it were specially the people of Jehovah, as also other considerations, tend to impress us with the truth that when the Supreme Being would bring men generally to himself, it must be by some other system, more comprehensive in its plan, and more spiritual in its character.

Hence the various intimations given by the ancient prophets that Messiah should introduce a new and purer government, relating emphatically to the heart, adapted to sinners as such of every country, and in the promulgation of which he should be "a Light to enlighten the gentiles," as well as "the glory of his people Israel;" and hence, in almost the first sermon delivered by the Great Teacher, he taught that God henceforth would not be exclusively worshipped either at Jerusalem, or Gerizim, but that he sought every where for those who would "worship him in Spirit and in truth."

But, as we have already seen, it was long

before even the apostles of Jesus understood that the gentile nations were to be brought into the fold of the Great Shepherd and bishop of souls; and various means were necessary to bring them to the performance of zealous and active duty. We have seen that more than three years had elapsed after the commission had been issued to publish evangelical truth to the world, and that Saul had been converted, and specifically appointed "the apostle to the gentiles," tacitly reproving the apostles for their neglect. But we now learn that even *he* did not for some years after his conversion enter on his special commission, but confined his labors to his own brethren, the Jews.

But the plans of Jehovah can never fail for want of agents to carry them into execution. He who can raise up children to Abraham from the very stones of the street, when he chooses to convert idolatrous gentiles into humble and teachable disciples of his Son, will do it with infinite and glorious ease, and in a way which shall honor himself.

The principal scenes to which our present

narrative will relate, were laid at Cesarea, originally called Strato's tower; but being rebuilt by Herod the Great, he called it Cesarea, in honor of Augustus Cesar. It was in Judea, on the sea-shore, about sixty miles north-west from Jerusalem; it contained a fine harbor, many splendid temples and palaces, with a vast number of beautiful houses, and was the seat of the Roman governor, while Judea was a province of that empire; and after the destruction of Jerusalem, it became the capital of Palestine. It was one of the largest cities of that country, and was chiefly inhabited by Greeks, though the number of Jews and Samaritans was also considerable.

In this city resided, with his family, Cornelius, a native, as it should seem, of Italy, an officer of the Roman army, being the commander of a hundred men, who composed a part of the Italian cohort, or company of the legion, thus distinguishing them from the provincial or other soldiers in the city, and probably forming the body-guard of the governor. This Cornelius, a Roman, knew but comparatively little of Revelation. He had, no doubt, heard somewhat of the

Jews as the professed people of Jehovah, but seems to have had no association whatever with them. He was, however, despite of such religious ignorance, and of the profession of warlike character which he assumed, a man of piety. He carefully studied the great subject of religion, prayed fervently, with his family, to the God of heaven, manifested ardent benevolence to men, and was intently anxious in his inquiries, and ardent in his pursuits after a further knowledge of the most important truth.

No one of serious thought can contemplate such a man devoting himself to piety, without cherishing elevated pleasure as he sees how the blessed God can bring even gentiles into a state of preparation for the gospel, or without feeling himself reprovèd that, with vastly superior advantages, he has himself done far less than Cornelius to serve and to please the Infinite Being.

Nor can we see this daily, perhaps hourly service of Jehovah, without admiring the grace shown to the Centurion in return. The Lord never suffers prayer to be presented to him in vain. The gentile prays, and the God of Abraham hears, and speedily

shows his readiness to place him in the spiritual family of the patriarch. One afternoon, at three o'clock, the very hour when at Jerusalem the Jews were wont daily to present the evening sacrifice, and the hour at which, in those days, they every where presented prayer to God, Cornelius, also, was engaged in the exercises of devotion. By what means he had so far become acquainted with Christian duties we cannot tell; but it is certain that he felt their importance, and had devoted this day, in a special manner, to abstinence from all pleasant food, and to fervent supplication to heaven for increased instruction. He is favored with a distinct and immediate sight of an angel, bearing a direct message from the throne of Jehovah. And what is it? The messenger calls him by name, and Cornelius, with solemn reverence, inquires into the Divine requirement. The message is one of mercy, but greatly different to what might have been expected. The Centurion prays for holy knowledge; and the angel comes, not to bring it, but to direct him to send for Peter, that he may instruct him in the way of duty.

We cannot but be interested in the fact that peculiar honor was always conferred on this apostle,—honors greater, on the whole, than any enjoyed by his brethren. There were several considerable imperfections of character about Peter,—much impetuosity, and great apparent want of thought and prudence; but his *heart* was right, his love to Christ was indisputable, and the ardor of his zeal, especially after the resurrection of his Lord, was incessant. He was always ready to labor for the glory of Christ; and hence he was honored with so much success, on and immediately after the day of Pentecost; and hence, also, is he now to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, in their representatives, Cornelius and his household.

With what simplicity and directness did the angel give his instructions to Cornelius! Here were no pompous introduction, no fine affected language; no brilliant imagery, nor theatrical gesture; his message is important, and his language admirably agrees with it. He is to send for a man named Simon Peter, who lived at a tanner's house by the seaside, a short distance from the city of Joppa, who should give the information as to his

faith and duty for which he had so ardently prayed. So true is it that God hears and answers the requests of those who call upon him in his own way.

Unheard but by Jehovah's ears,
The good Centurion knelt alone;
Nor e'er supposed his prayers and tears
Would help a world by sin undone.

But in him and his friends we see the first fruits of a glorious harvest to Christ from the gentile world.

No time was lost in obeying the distinct and well understood command of God. On the very same evening, three of his servants, one of them an eminently devout man, were dispatched to Joppa on this important errand. This was a city much distinguished in the sacred volume. It was situated on the coast of the Mediterranean sea, about forty-five miles north-west of Jerusalem, and about thirty miles south of Cesarea, the principal sea-port of Palestine, and alike remarkable for its antiquities and the importance of transactions connected with it; but never had a more important event occurred than the one we have now to consider.

Will the reader accompany us, as we hasten to precede these travellers on their journey, and to reach as early as we may the residence of the apostle. We find him on the flat roof of the house of Simon the tanner, engaged in fervent supplication. Of the importance of this duty,—the value of this privilege he, doubtless, had strong persuasion. No minister, nor even apostle of Christ could expect success in his vocation unless he gave himself to the word of God and to prayer. Was Peter just now in difficulty as to the path of duty; was he now desirous of imploring from his Lord the knowledge as to what service he should next engage in; and was he indeed anxious to ascertain where he should next labor for souls? If so, he shall receive an answer, but different, both in its character and manner to what he probably expected. Centuries before had Jonah been sent from this very city to deliver the first prophecies from heaven to the Gentiles of Nineveh; and now from the same place is to be carried the first message of a Saviour's mercy to a Gentile household. Happy, interesting thought!

Peter prayed,—and that for a lengthened

period ; and he began to suffer pain from hunger ; but before food could be made ready for him, he fell into an ecstasy, called in our translation, a *trance*. He was entirely absorbed in a subject altogether foreign from earth ;—as much separated from external objects as though the soul had passed from the body. Thus, long ago, had Balaam been transported from his usual pursuits and feelings, and thus did Paul become entranced in the temple. Peter saw, or thought he saw the heavens opened, and a vast sheet seemed to descend, filled with the various animals of earth, those chiefly if not entirely, which the Levitical law had pronounced unclean and unfit for food among the Jews ; he seemed to hear a voice calling upon him to slay and eat of these animals. He hesitated, and well he might, as he recollected the Divine law ; and yet the command was imperative. Would he not be ready to think of the requirement of heaven to Abraham to sacrifice his son, and be disposed to feel that a voice from heaven so direct, must surely be of higher authority than a law chiefly intended to be ritual, and which, of course, could be repealed by the

will of the Lawgiver ; or would he begin to cast about in his mind the inquiry whether God was thus teaching him some important lesson ? Yes, he soon began to learn that God was casting down the barriers between the Jews and other nations, and placing the whole of mankind on a perfect level before his own throne. Three times does he behold the vision and listen to the voice, so that his memory and his mind must be both very deeply impressed.

His difficulty is soon removed, for the messengers of Cornelius, at this very point of time, arrive at his dwelling, and before he has even seen these men, the Spirit of God instructs him to accompany them on their return, because all is going on under the Divine direction. The men soon put him in possession of a full knowledge of all the facts connected with the house of Cornelius on the preceding day, and arrangements are made for their return, accompanied with Peter and six of his Christian brethren belonging to Joppa, on the following day. It was fit that a duty so important should be performed with all promptitude, and that an event so grand as the union of the first

Gentile converts with the Christian church should be duly attested by competent witnesses.

In the mean time Cornelius had neither been indifferent to the most interesting events of his life, nor negligent of the duty which he now felt to devolve upon him. He had calculated the hour at which the apostle would probably arrive; and feeling the importance of the message he bore, anxious in every way to treat the messenger of God with respect, and intent on the highest happiness of his family and kindred, he collected a company which does not appear to have been small, to listen to Peter, and to receive wisdom from him. Wise and benevolent was the conduct of this noble Roman, and amply was he repaid in the blessings which descended on himself and on all around him. Those who imitate his conduct enrich their own souls, benefit their friends, increase the church, and glorify God.

The meeting between Peter and Cornelius was deeply interesting. Cornelius shows him, as the messenger of heaven, the highest possible respect, and Peter frankly tells him the difficulty he would have felt in the in-

terview but for the Divine communication he had received; and intimates that henceforth to visit the Gentiles was not to be regarded by the Jews as impiety.

It was felt on all hands that now no time should be lost. With cheerful promptitude the friends of Cornelius had acceded to his request to meet a man whom God had sent among them; and the interview must of necessity be one of great importance and interest. How often do we meet the messengers of God, in his own house, and in his immediate presence, who speak to us in his name, and with what indifference do we too frequently regard them! The Centurion proceeds to narrate the vision with which he had, four days before, been favored, and which led to his sending for the apostle; and then declares the readiness of himself and his friends to hear from him the requirements of the blessed God. It is indeed refreshing and invigorating to mark the spirit of the apostle, and to see the way in which he brings the character of Jesus Christ before his hearers, and asserts his claims upon them. The same grand topics of Christ and his cross which Peter had been accustomed

to urge on his brethren the Jews, he now publishes to the Gentiles, asserting the right of Messiah to be the universal Lord and governor of mankind. He places all men on a level as sinners, proclaims atonement through the sacrifice of the cross, and declares the equal readiness of God to pardon sinners of every nation who repent and believe the gospel.

Nor was the truth thus faithfully and affectionately spoken, delivered in vain; such an event, indeed, would be impossible, for the word of God must prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. The gospel must convert the sinner, or condemn him; it must be to every hearer a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. In the instance before us no doubt could be entertained of the result; for while Peter, with his accustomed simplicity and energy, was exalting his adorable Lord, the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous, as well as his sanctifying influences, descended on the whole assembly, thus showing, as on the day of Pentecost, his entire approbation of the preaching of Peter, both as to its doctrines and its manner. What an evidence was here of the

power of the truth, of the love of the Spirit, and of the fact that neither our salvation nor our highest joys are to be drawn from ritual observances. Here is one instance given us of the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous influences, before baptism, lest we should infer that this gift is given as the reward of a practical attention to the ordinance; and but one instance, lest we should be led to expect the Divine favor apart from holy obedience.

Might these persons, then, neglect the institution of Christ, and decline that baptism which Peter had described as originating with John, and again enjoined, in somewhat of a new character in the Saviour's commission to disciple and to baptize in all nations? Instead of this, the apostle, with all the authority connected with his office, "*commanded* them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." He admitted no discussion. They had received the Holy Ghost,—had been specially marked as his property,—and therefore must profess themselves his servants, in his own way, and henceforth live only to him, and for the advancement of his glory. His reasoning was unanswer-

able,—“Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?” Their reception of holy influence is an argument for obedience, and a reason for full and entire consecration to God. This obedience, indeed, is the only proof we can furnish to the world that we have heartily given ourselves to the service of Jehovah.

It would be impossible for us to describe the happiness which these new converts,—so lately ignorant of Jesus, but so ready to believe in him and to obey his laws as soon as they did hear of him, enjoyed, now they felt that they for ever belonged to him. They exulted in their deliverance from ruin and death, and saw the glorious career of purity and joy opening before them. Like the Treasurer of Ethiopia, they would go on their way rejoicing.

To the servants of Cornelius, and to his companions in arms there must have been somewhat of intense interest in these transactions. They had probably witnessed his devotion to his country, as shown in his courage and ardor on the field of battle, and had most readily obeyed his orders;

and now they see him, with all the docility of a little child listening to the Gospel of Jesus, and obeying his commands. They behold him enlisting under the banner of Jesus, as the great captain of his salvation, taking to himself the whole armor of God, to contend against principalities and powers, and pressing on to certain and eternal victory, being even "more than conqueror." They must surely have been impressed with the reality and the power of the religion he had so recently embraced.

The happiness which the Centurion and his friends had received through the agency of Peter was so great, and their views of his stores of knowledge as boundless was so natural, that we cannot be surprised they should "pray him to tarry with them certain days." The privilege of his society and his ministry would be highly valued; and his loss, when compelled to leave them, would be deeply regretted. Happy are they who are constantly favored with the apostolic writings and with a holy ministry; may they never forget their solemn responsibility, nor fail to improve the privileges of enjoying fellowship with Christ themselves, and

making him known to others ; neither may they neglect any of the commands of the Lord Jesus. The first Christians ever regarded their baptism as a solemn duty, and as laying them under the deepest obligations to belong to Christ, "walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless."

Dear Saviour, let us never be,
Before the world, ashamed of thee,
Nor shrink from duty's call ;
Our work to do thee service here,
Our hope in glory to appear,
Where thou art all in all.

LYDIA AND HER HOUSEHOLD.

ACTS XVI.

Then, with a firm, unshrinking step, the watery path she
trod,
And gave, with woman's deathless trust, her being to her
God;
And when, all dripping, from the flood she rose, like lily-
stem,
Methought that spotless brow might wear an angel's dia-
dem.

SIGOURNEY.

THERE is a beautiful simplicity in the narratives of the sacred volume, which we can meet with nowhere else. The holy book is designed for all portions of the human family, and adapts itself to the masses, as well as to any select section of men. Hence it deals principally in facts, rather than in reasonings, and shows us truth and excellence embodied in living persons. Especially are we led to contemplate religion as adapted to every class, and as working in a similar manner in the hearts of rich and poor, old and young, of each sex and of every coun-

try. We are conducted by the sacred historian Luke, to a river side, probably a branch or stream of the Strymon, near the city of Philippi, not far west of Neapolis, a fuller description of which may hereafter come before us. Let us accompany Paul and Timothy to this interesting spot.

Wherever a few truly pious persons are found, they will be desirous of assembling together for the public worship of God. It seems that in Philippi there were but few Jews residing, and probably it contained no synagogue; but by the river-side there was a prayer-house, where a small company from time to time assembled, the sexes apart, for the worship of Jehovah, and to talk of his word and his requirements. The apostles, wherever they went, were desirous of glorifying Christ, and of publishing the grand doctrine of his sacrificial atonement. And especially would they do this whenever they could meet a worshipping assembly; when then they heard that a company of women were accustomed to meet at the river side on a Sabbath morning, Paul and his companion determined to meet them there. And there we are introduced to them, and find

them mingling with the assembled worshippers, familiarly expounding the word of God, and urging on every conscience the importance of a practical attention to it. Here was the first instance with which we are acquainted of the preaching of the gospel in Europe, though it is probable that a church already existed at Rome.

Among the persons now assembled at the prayer-house was a female merchant named Lydia, with her family or attendants. She belonged to the city of Thyatira, nearly three hundred miles distant from Philippi, and was only now sojourning for a season in the latter city on affairs of business. Her merchandize was in an article made from a shell-fish, and used for dyeing the garments of the wealthy of a purple color. For the excellence of this dye Thyatira and its neighborhood had become celebrated, and the trade in it was extensive. Lydia, with her servants was now prosecuting this business. We neither read of her having a husband or children, nor can we reasonably suppose, even if she had them, that she would be found with young children when on business so far from home.

It is more to our present purpose to remark, that she was a woman intent on the pursuit of the highest spiritual objects. It seems probable that she was a Gentile, but a proselyte to the Jewish religion. As such she was found, with other females, worshipping Jehovah. Probably she little supposed on that lovely Sabbath morning, as she walked to that sweet rural spot, what delightful occurrences would take place during that happy day. In a high and holy sense being in the way the Lord met her as he does all those who accept his invitation to seek his face.

And now our imagination sees the interesting group hanging on the lips of Paul, who joyfully tells of salvation by the blood of the cross. The same delightful tale he has every where to tell, for it glorifies his Great Master, and every where do mankind need the same Infinite Redeemer of souls. It is quite probable that the party had never before heard how the types and the prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, or how exactly adapted was his salvation to the moral necessities of man. As he preached, how would his

heart warm with love to Christ, and with what ease and pleasure would he derive illustrations from the surrounding scenery. The *proseucha*, or house of prayer, would remind him of the gracious aspect of the throne of God, and direct his thoughts to the all-prevalent Intercessor, by whom alone they could boldly approach that throne; while the river would as strongly suggest the rapid progress of life, and the consequent necessity of an immediate attention to the concerns of futurity; together with the fulness and the freeness of divine blessings, and the importance of embracing them before they pass away for ever. Happy group, exalted messenger, blessed message! We also have the inestimably precious gospel; let us, like Lydia and her household, embrace it too.

It is a painful thought that while religion has chiefly to do with the heart, the source of feeling and action, that heart is naturally and by choice closed against the message of infinite mercy. It has been perverted by sin, and has no relish for the highest truth, nor love for the greatest and best of Beings. We hate God and his gospel;—we

reject his claims, and press onwards to our own eternal ruin. And so inveterate are our prejudices and hatred that nothing but the almighty power of God can enlighten our understandings and dispose our hearts to the reception of the saving truths of his great system of mercy. It pleased the Holy Spirit on this happy occasion, to infuse light into the soul of Lydia, graciously to melt away her prejudices, and sweetly to incline her to receive, in all their fulness, the truths published by the apostle. What decisive evidence does every day present of the necessity of Divine influence to convert the sinner, and bring him practically to attend to the great concerns of his salvation ; and how great the favor that we are encouraged to pray for this holy influence, both for ourselves and for others !

Here then we are called to admire the grace of God operating on the hearts of those who probably never until now had heard the gospel of Christ. How often is it seen that the children of holy persons, who have heard the doctrines of Christianity published for years, and who have been the subjects of fervent tearful prayers of parents

and friends, hear the truth in vain, while aliens and strangers embrace it on the very first publication of it to which they listen. Let my reader fear lest he be cast out of the kingdom of God, while heathens and the greatest of sinners are received into it. Let us pray ardently and constantly for the bestowment of heavenly influence on all our worshipping assemblies.

We have already had occasion to remark, that the apostles on every occasion of teaching and preaching the Lord Jesus must have illustrated the nature and urged the importance of Christian baptism. They taught that their Great Lord claimed the separation of his disciples from his enemies, and required a full and public profession of attachment to his service; and that he did this by commanding that they should avow their faith in his word, their dependence on his atonement, and their consecration of all future life to his service. And, moreover, he required that this should be done by their being buried, or immersed, in water, emblematical of their being separated from sin and the world, and that they should emerge from the liquid tomb to live hence-

forth only to the glory of their Lord, and the increase and holiness of his church. Here then we see this believing family thus consecrating all they are and all they possess to Christ and to his cause. Happy persons ! who can tell their joy, or describe their usefulness ! Deep must have been the impressions on surrounding spectators, and vast must have been the results, for here was the commencement of a Christian church in the important city of Philippi, which greatly flourished, and to whom, as we learn from Paul's epistle to them, he bore a special regard.

Let us pause another moment to contemplate this believing and baptized family. Feelings utterly unknown to them till now pervade every heart ; feelings heavenly in their source, powerful in their character, and influential and lasting in their results. Henceforth these persons lived for a new object, were regulated by a new rule, and cherished prospects of the most delightful character for time and for eternity. They exulted in bearing the name and in being the property of the Lord Jesus, in extending his knowledge, and in the expectation

of dwelling eternally with him. With such feelings, and such a prospect, the trials and persecutions of life would be of small account; and the consistency of Christian conduct, and of advancing the religion of Messiah, would appear of the highest importance.

How often, in all probability, as they conferred together in sacred intercourse, after the secular engagements of the day, would they contrast their character and prospects with their former condition. How superior their intercourse with heaven to all the merchandize of earth! With what pleasure would they often speak of the high privilege before them of conveying the knowledge of Christ crucified to their relatives and friends in their native city. Is it not reasonable to suppose that the church of Thyatira, of which we read in the Apocalypse, originated in their pious efforts? Who can tell the whole results of a single sermon, or of the conversion of one soul! O for more of the fervent zeal of these new disciples in extending the knowledge of Christ, so admirably adapting itself to every place and to every society,—for more of this

simple faith in the gospel, leading at once to prompt and cheerful obedience to Christ,—and for more of this holy joy, springing from love to the Lord of heaven.

It is delightful to observe that the religion of Lydia and her household was not merely a temporary excitement, but that it sustained the fiery trials of persecution. Too often have we seen the most powerful feelings succeeded by a cold and icy state of mind; and those who suddenly gave themselves to the church, have as suddenly given themselves back to the world. But this happy household continued to feel the claims of piety on their hearts and lives, and they willingly submitted themselves to the performance of its duties and the experience of its joys. In the midst of their happiness, Paul and Silas, two of their warmest Christian associates, and most devoted servants of Jesus, were cast into prison; but even there the presence of their adorable Lord was realized, and abundant and unexpected success accompanied their labors; and here too the deepest sympathies of Lydia and her family followed them. Theirs was not a religion which

only recognizes its friends in the season of prosperity ; on the other hand, it draws from persecution itself an argument in favor of its divinity, and towards its subjects extends its pity and its aid.

When the servants of Christ have served him by their sufferings, he generally raises them to freedom and honor. The magistrates of Philippi had been informed of the fact that they had illegally imprisoned Paul and Silas, they being Roman citizens ; and with proper explanation and apology they restored the holy men to freedom. But before they could leave the city they must visit the family of Lydia, and with them assemble the converts recently made at Philippi. This happy family had been exceedingly desirous of enjoying the society, and of partaking of the labors of Paul and Silas. They needed their instructions, and wished to evince their gratitude in return. And now, in the day of darkness, these zealous disciples of Christ would meet with them, more fully to expound the will of their Great Master, to animate them in their adherence to Christ, notwithstanding all the difficulties and sufferings to which they were

exposed, and to direct them in the improvement of their privileges, and the discharge of their duties. Happy house of resort! May the friends of Jesus ever thus meet to help each other on to heaven! Here Paul and Silas were greatly encouraged in their arduous labors, and would go forth from hence encouraged to engage in other and still mightier efforts for the extension of the gospel.

We cannot contemplate such a family as this without feelings of grateful pleasure. Their religion was simple, powerful, and directly practical. They believed the Divine testimony concerning Christ, were baptized in his name, and became his servants for ever. Infinite is the importance of our possessing their views and feelings, and of imitating their blessed example. Nothing else can stand in its place. To all who experience this piety we would say in the language of one of our sweetest and most amiable writers :—

All hail! ye blessed band,
Shrink not to do his will :
In deep humility, this work
Of righteousness fulfil.

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER AND HIS FAMILY.

Acts XVI.

Can that be he who scowled of late,
The Cerberus of the dungeon gate ?
Whose heart, from human pity shielded,
Was harsher than the chains he wielded ?
How changed the savage now ! his eye
Is softened into sympathy ;
He raised those sufferers from the ground,
And washed and soothed each festering wound ;
Then, as he meekly bent to hear
His guests of heavenly mercy tell,
Down his rough cheek the unbidden tear,
Large, warm, and bright as childhood's fell.

HANKINSON.

THE whole account of the proceedings connected with the establishment of the first Christian church at Philippi is one of deep interest. It displays the energy of Paul in his character and preaching ; the awful depravity of the heart of man, in his opposition to the gospel ; the power of the Holy Spirit

in his gracious influence on the soul; and the sustaining and elevating character of the religion of Jesus. All these will be traced in the narrative before us.

Philippi, first of all called Dathos, and afterwards Crenides, was originally within the limits of ancient Thrace; but being conquered by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, he named it after himself; by him also it was repaired, fortified, and greatly extended. It was one of the principal cities of *prima Macedonia*, and according to the unerring testimony of coins yet in existence, had a Roman colony within its bounds, favored with high privileges. It was the scene of several important battles, especially of the decisive one between Antony and Brutus. The gospel was first preached in this city by the apostle Paul, about the year 52. It is now magnificent in its ruins, as we learn from two American missionaries, who visited it in 1834, by whom we are told that it is now called *Filibah*. We have already seen that the first labors of Paul and his companion, Silas, led to the conversion of Lydia and her family. Very shortly after this we find

these holy men in prison. It appears that a poor young woman under satanic influence, considerably annoyed these servants of God; and that her conduct tended to the prevention of the progress of Divine truth; so that pity for her, and zeal for truth induced Paul to exert his miraculous power by expelling the evil spirit from her. This gave great offence to her masters, who realized much gain by her having been wont to impose upon the common people, pretending to tell their fortunes. As the law provided no redress for their pecuniary losses, they professed great zeal for the public welfare, and excited the popular prejudice against Paul and Silas, as Jews; these citizens easily obtained their wishes;—and the magistrates committed the two preachers—disturbers of the public peace, they were called—to prison.

Look at these innocent and benevolent men with their clothes rent by the very magistrates,—beaten with many stripes, and committed to the hands of a cruel jailer, who appears even to have exceeded his commission, thrusting them into the innermost, and most unhealthy part of the prison, and

making their feet fast in a painful posture in a wooden machine. They were probably compelled to lie on their backs, with their wounds undressed, unable to obtain a moment's change of position. Never did men appear to be placed in a more hopeless condition, having no one apparent source of comfort.

But the soul of the good man cannot be bound. His heart, in the hour of trial and of suffering rises to God, who can comfort him in all his tribulation, and fill him with holy joy and delight. These christian men could not sleep; but as God was with Joseph in prison, with Daniel in the lion's den, and had recently been with Peter in the jail of Herod, even so, could He convert the dungeon where Paul and Silas were confined into the very vestibule of heaven. They had in themselves, altogether independent of external circumstances, sources of happiness. Their consciences had been brought into a state of peace with God and man by the application of the blood of Jesus; and they knew that their friendship with God would be eternal; why then should they yield to despondency? True, trials were

before them, and they knew not but that death might befall them ; but they could pray for the sustaining grace of God, and that he would make all tend to the furtherance of his gospel. True, it was midnight, and all was gloom and darkness around them, but they "prayed and sang praises unto God," on whose promises they trust for support and deliverance, and who, they are sure, will sanctify all to the highest and noblest purposes. It was a scene of true moral sublimity ; the prisoners heard them and were, no doubt, favorably impressed with their religion, and somewhat prepared for the exposition of its principles and duties to which they soon after listened.

Men are often least secure when they indulge most confidence. What could have seemed more certain than that the prison at Philippi was now impenetrable, except by the keys of its jailer ? That important functionary, having made all fast, retires to his couch ; midnight throws its silence over the earth ; and save the voices of the imprisoned servants of Christ, engaged in holy melody, not a sound is heard. But the God of heaven now interposes, a rum-

bling noise is heard first at a distance, and then nearer, and yet nearer; the earthquakes; the foundations of the prison are shaken; every door is thrown wide open, every fetter falls from the limbs of each of the prisoners, and every one feels most powerfully the presence of the God of the whole earth. It cannot be that any other agency could have brought about such astonishing events; and such is the surprise and astonishment excited in every mind, that no one of all the prisoners even thinks of making his escape.

Every act of God teaches a lesson, and is tending to an end worthy of himself. The jailer, hitherto a cruel, ignorant, superstitious heathen, is awoken by the noise and agitation so suddenly and unexpectedly risen up around him. His dwelling seems to have overlooked the prison and its gates, and his first concern is about his prisoners, for whose safety he is responsible, and whose escape might cost him his life. In this state of confusion and anxiety, he was about to fall on his sword and end his earthly existence. Such he had been taught was no sin. Socrates had said that when a man was tired

of life, he had a right to leave it; Cato had perished by his own hand at Utica; and in Philippi itself, both Brutus and Cassius, with a number of their friends, had sought relief from the mortification of defeat, by a recourse to suicide; and nothing better could be expected from a poor infatuated jailer.

But something infinitely better is in reserve for him. There is a system of mercy which gives new value to human life, while it unfolds eternal existence and joy beyond the grave. Paul, filled with benevolence, and concerned both for the temporal and the spiritual happiness of a man who hitherto had shown towards him and his companion nothing but cruelty, calls out, in tones of earnestness and kindness, "Do thyself no harm!" Such is the tender counsel of Christianity and its Great Author, and such the spirit of those who preach it. Happy are those who, like the jailer at Philippi, listen to its sounds and obey them.

The means employed by the Holy Spirit to bring sinners under his government are various, but always adapted to the circumstances in which they are placed. The

agitation and distress of the jailer, which originated in fear about his own life, soon changes its character. He ascertains the safety of his prisoners, and so becomes assured of his own life and freedom; but he sees in this earthquake, and its attendant miracles, and in the character of his Christian prisoners, the reality of the religion they have recently taught in the city, and in their present serenity and kindness the power of that religion to sustain the heart, and to enhance acts only of kindness. Conscious of his being destitute of this religion, and therefore of the danger, present and eternal, in which he is placed, he calls for a light, and placing himself, all trembling and anxious before these persecuted, and by himself ill-treated ministers of Jesus, he inquires in the simple but forcible language of earnest solicitude, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul at once understood the inquiry to relate to the salvation of his soul, and doubtless rejoiced that it was proposed in so correct a spirit and manner to those who could answer it.

The scriptures tell of but one way of salvation; and it is equally adapted to all

classes of men, in every country and age. Whatever may be the shades of difference in their character and circumstances, all men have sinned,—have incurred the Divine displeasure,—and must perish, unless there be an intervention of infinite and sovereign mercy. That mercy has provided salvation through the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God; the only way to receive the benefits of which, is by the belief of the testimony of God concerning him, and a consequent reliance on his infinite pity and love. The apostle, therefore, had only to entreat the jailer to believe in the Lord Jesus,—to receive him as a teacher from heaven,—cordially to embrace his doctrines,—and to look to his mercy for the enjoyment of eternal life.

Who can wonder that the whole family of the Jailer should assemble around Paul, and that he should speak unto them the word of the Lord? Never before had so important a message reached them, never before was their attention to any communication so firmly riveted, and never before did any thing they heard produce such speedy and mighty results. The Jailer

yields his heart to Christ, "believing in God with all his house." They all become new creatures in Christ Jesus. The entire household was begotten again by the word of truth. We see here the character of the Gospel, we learn how it is to be published to men, and how it is always in season to declare the plan of God's salvation. Men of all classes, and in all ages may thus be brought under the renovating power of Divine truth.

Not a moment is now lost in showing the results of the gospel. The very hour the jailer became acquainted with the truth and grace of the revelation of mercy from heaven, he showed his love to its ministers for their work's sake. He had assisted in the infliction of pain; and now with all tenderness, he seeks to give them ease by washing their wounds, and ministering in every way to their comfort. Christianity, like her divine Author, weeps over the miseries of man, especially the sufferings of the followers of Christ, and promotes their happiness on earth, as she leads them to holier and higher bliss in heaven.

We look on the whole household with de-

light. We stay not now to inquire whether any of the prisoners believed and obeyed the gospel; we are fully occupied with this beloved domestic circle. Parents and children, and servants have heard the gospel, and believed it; have turned from sin, and become reconciled to God; have renounced their heathenism, and cleave to Christ. And now, how shall they seal their solemn dedication to heaven; how shall they prove their love and devotedness to Christ; and how shall they furnish a solemn pledge that henceforth they are identified with the despised and persecuted Christians to whom Paul and Silas are accustomed to preach? There is an ordinance which the Great Founder of Christianity has expressly appointed for these purposes. It is that of Baptism;—immersion into the name of the Holy Three in One; by which his authority is recognized, his religion professed, and his service fully entered on. And as the Great Master requires all his disciples to obey him in this, as in all other matters, the jailer “was baptized, he and all his straightway.” It mattered not that the shades of darkness yet overspread the earth; they needed not

to depart from their own premises to obey their Lord in this ordinance. Near as the Strymon was to their city, they had "much water" still nearer at hand. Eastern writers, both ancient and modern, testify that the eastern prisons, or their yards within the walls, contain pools or tanks for their constant bathing, every way suitable for the administration of Christian immersion.

Let imagination now picture to us the baptism of this happy, happy circle. Into what a glorious world had they been introduced;—what exalted doctrines had been placed before them, and what elevated feelings had taken possession of their souls;—into what an endearing connection had they entered with each other, purer and more lasting than any derived from nature;—how would they henceforth become one with the holy of every world and of every age; and how would they ever after this look forward to the dwelling-place of God as their home! From this hour their society would be heavenly, their employment the service of Jehovah and the benefit of man, and their one grand aim conformity to the moral image of the Lord Jesus. Truly to them old things

had passed away, and all things had become new.

Such, no doubt, was the faith, and such the feelings with which one of them succeeded another in descending to the watery tomb, there to be buried with Christ, and to rise with him to newness of life. Happy they who in all things obey the commands and imitate the example of the blessed Redeemer.

Would that it were possible fully to imagine the interview, the delightful intercourse of this family, with Paul and Silas after their baptism! "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." As they sat at the frugal meal provided by Christian kindness, would there not be manifested a holy emulation as to who should most gratefully admire the Divine mercy they had each felt? Would they not exult in the change God had made so suddenly and so undeservedly? Would they not rejoice that Jehovah could make even the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain its remainder? And would they not cherish a holy rapture in the

thought that they were now united in the bonds of Christ, and to each other for eternity? Surely, under such circumstances they would exhort one another to discharge every duty with holy promptitude, and to bear every trial with Christian cheerfulness till they sat down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

One source of regret remained; Paul and Silas were yet prisoners, and it was not in the power of the Jailer legally to set them free. The law must be maintained, and the engagements of the Jailer fulfilled. There can, however, be no doubt of the tender sympathy of his heart and conduct towards them, and of his co-operation with them in obtaining their entire, honorable and speedy freedom. Let us imitate this happy family in their lively faith and cheerful obedience:

Be to this world as dead,—
Alive to that to come;
Our life in Christ is hid,
Who soon shall call us home.

THE CORINTHIAN CONVERTS.

ACTS XVIII.—1 CORINTHIANS I.

Behold the trophies of his arm,
We lately saw them Satan's prey ;
But Jesus has dissolved the charm,
And by his power has set them free.

Come then, dear friends, and share with us
The weight and honor of the cross ;
They who will follow Jesus thus,
Must be prepared for shame and loss.

KELLY.

THE gospel is equally adapted to men of every class, and is equally needed by every human being. When our blessed Master spoke of it as being preached to the poor, he did not mean that they needed it more than the rich ; but that it was intended for all, and that his servants should have respect to, and labor for, the salvation of the whole family of Adam ; preaching the word of Divine truth to every creature.

If an argument were needful to show the

sovereignty of Divine influence, and its necessity for the conversion of sinners, it would be easy to found one on the fact that in Athens, renowned as it was for its learning and love of wisdom, the eloquent and scriptural preaching of Paul was nearly without success; while in Corinth, the very seat of vice, the place where Satan's seat was, it accomplished some of its most splendid triumphs. Let us examine some of the facts connected with the interesting story.

The city of Corinth was situated on the isthmus which unites Peloponnesus to the other parts, and was the capital of Achaia. Its original name was Ephyra, and it is said to have been founded by Sisyphus, long before the siege of Troy. The original city was destroyed by the Romans, nearly one hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ; it was afterwards rebuilt by Julius Cesar, who planted in it a Roman colony, and it speedily regained more than its previous splendor. The magnificence of its buildings, the extent of its wealth and commerce, and especially its devotedness to philosophy and eloquence, made it famous throughout the world. By Cicero it was

called the light of all Greece, and by Florus the ornament of Greece.

But to us the city of Corinth is most interesting when examined in its moral aspect. And here, alas, the scene was truly revolting. "The world by wisdom knew not God." Corinth was, probably, of all the cities of the world, the most luxurious, proud, and licentious. Its profligacy almost exceeded credibility. To say of a woman that she was a Corinthian, was to intimate that she was a harlot. It was the seat of the temple of Venus, the goddess of love, or licentious passion. This temple was erected on a mountain on the south of the city, which was covered with magnificent buildings; and the law enjoined, that here one thousand beautiful females should officiate as courtesans before the altar; and in times of public calamity and danger these women attended at the sacrifices, and united with the other citizens in singing sacred hymns. From the price of their sin, a vast revenue was derived by the city. The result of all this, and much more which we cannot describe, on the morals of the inhabitants generally, may be easily conceived.

Paul describes their general character in awfully strong and glowing terms in the sixth chapter of his first letter to the church.

Such was the city into which the apostle Paul entered to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, about the year fifty-two. He determined not to know any thing among the Corinthians "save Jesus Christ and him crucified." On his arrival he found there a converted Jew, named Aquila, and his wife, Priscilla; they had recently arrived in Corinth from Italy, whence they had been driven by the Roman emperor, Claudius, who had banished all the Christian Jews from his empire. These persons were tent-makers, a trade to which Paul had been trained, and on which he now seemed to depend for a livelihood; and with them for a time, at least, he resided. Not a few persons, in this age, would feel somewhat like disgust at the idea of a Christian minister thus following a secular calling; but, be it remembered, that this was done by the most eminent servant of Christ in his day, and that in the most polished city in the world.

Although the apostle had now begun fully to understand that his mission was espe-

cially to the heathen, yet he usually, wherever he went, commenced his labors among his brethren the Jews. So he acted at Corinth. From sabbath to sabbath he was found in the synagogue arguing with the Jews and the Grecian proselytes, on the doctrines and prophecies of revelation, and especially on the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. Delightful indeed is it to see such a man engaged in so important a task, and to imagine the spirit in which his duty was discharged.

On the arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia, where Paul a short time before had left them, his holy ardor was greatly increased. He felt the claims of his Great Master; his soul was grieved with the impenitence of the Jews, and the idolatry of the Gentiles, while he was encouraged by the presence of his companions; and with an intensity of feeling unwonted, even in him, he urged on the Jews the Messiahship and the claims of Jesus. But, alas, this only called into exercise their bitterest enmity, and led them to speak in the most blasphemous terms of the crucified Nazarene. In the utmost abhorrence of their

conduct, he declared the whole blame of their rejection of the gospel to be their own; and renouncing all further intimacy with them, he turned to the Corinthians generally, resolving especially to publish among them the Gospel of Jesus. He had previously acted in a similar manner at Antioch, and did so in one or two subsequent cases. This was his duty, and happy was it for him that he could appeal to the Great Searcher of hearts as to the purity of his motives and conduct; while the guilt of his hearers in rejecting his message was inconceivably dreadful.

We will stop here a moment to consider the only remedy provided by the blessed God for a lost world. Had we been consulted, we should have supposed that the men of Corinth could only have been drawn from their sinful worship by learned arguments, urged with eloquence at least equal to their own. We might have expected that vivid representations should be made to them of the fitness and the beauty of virtue; and that they should be gradually drawn from their impurity to serve the living and true God. But such is not the

divine method of saving men. In the exercise of his infinite compassion, God sent his Son into the world that he might offer himself as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all who should believe on him. And this doctrine of salvation by the death of the crucified Nazarene must be preached to all men, of every class and country, of every age and clime, as the only way in which they can enjoy friendship with God. No matter that men should feel "the offence of the cross;" no matter how great a stumbling block it may seem to the Jews, or how foolish such a plan may appear to the Gentiles; in this way, and in this way only will Jehovah bring sinners to happiness on earth and in heaven. This doctrine of the cross is the power of God to salvation. Here alone is the full manifestation of the Divine character, of Messiah's love, of man's sinfulness and his way of safety, and the security of the happiness of society.

Talk we of morals! O thou bleeding Lamb,
The grand morality is love of Thee!

It is of unspeakable importance that we
should distinctly see and be powerfully im-

pressed with the fact, that the doctrine of salvation by the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, is at once the source of individual salvation, and the ground of public morals. The first part of this statement is more generally admitted than the last. Paul was fully persuaded that the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, and that only, would make men Christians, or diffuse happiness throughout society. Never was a country happy till this was felt by its inhabitants. All other forms of religion place either the king or the priest between God and man, through whom alone we can transact affairs with heaven. But here, when the sinner stands before high Heaven, and confesses his guilt, and through the blood of the covenant indulges hope of forgiveness, he rejoices in peace with God, and passes on to enjoy and communicate freedom among men. Every appeal to history and to observation will confirm this representation, which we trust will induce every reader, on the grounds of patriotism, as well as from higher motives, to disseminate around him the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Nor is it less worthy of remark, that Paul does not present the doctrines of Christianity to the Corinthians even with his usual eloquence and force. From his own description of the discharge of his ministry in Corinth, we learn that being deeply impressed with the doctrine of the cross, considered simply in itself, he laid aside all the arts of eloquence, and with more than his accustomed simplicity he published a crucified Saviour. Thus did he test, and thus more forcibly than ever did he feel and witness the mighty influence of Divine truth.

How readily can we imagine the scornful sneers, the contemptuous look, and the bitter sarcasm with which the apostle's doctrine would be heard by not a few of the citizens of Corinth. But wait awhile, and let us see the mighty results.

It would seem that when Paul resolved on specially seeking the salvation of the Gentiles in Corinth, he changed the place of his residence, to the house of Justus, probably a Christian believer, who lived very near to the synagogue. Perhaps the apostle thought this part of the city more convenient for an assembly, or possibly he felt that the pre-

judices of the Corinthians would be lessened by his living with one of their own number, while the nearness of the house to the synagogue would make it more convenient to any of the inquiring Jews to visit him. How important is it that Christians, and especially Christian ministers, should, by removing any little grounds of prejudice, seek to make themselves and their message more acceptable to the public. They may not tamper with their message, nor even try to make the offence of the cross less than it appears in the New Testament; yet by purity and benevolence—by true Christian courtesy and politeness—they may do much to attract and win men to Christ.

We should scarcely have expected, under such circumstances, that the first instance of usefulness in his new residence would be the conversion of a Jewish family. Such, however, was the fact. "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house." Happy Paul, happy converts! Nor does the usefulness of the apostle stop here; for the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, are gathered into the Christian fold. Can it really be true that

the humbling doctrines of the cross of Christ will be believed by the impure idolators of the most corrupt city in the world? Can the worshipper at the synagogue, and the worshipper at the shrine of Venus, be alike induced to bow at the foot of the cross? If the gospel can indeed convert such sinners, it must truly be the power of God, and its efficacy in the conquest of the world may be fully relied on. If it can change the Corinthians, and establish a church among them, Christians may confidently employ it as an instrument to bring all on earth to submit to God.

And this mighty triumph it did effect; for with inimitable beauty and simplicity has Luke recorded, "and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." Here was Crispus, and probably his family, for they were believers; there was Gaius, a man who seems to have risen to great eminence in the church, and to have enjoyed in after years the friendship of the apostle John, and Stephanus and his household, a family eminently attached to pious habits, addicting, or habituating themselves to the ministry of the saints;—here they were the

first fruits of Paul's ministry at Corinth, and the founders, under God, of the large and flourishing church of that city. The conduct of these persons would, no doubt, attract considerable attention in the city, and be the topic of conversation and sarcasm in many an evening party. Be it so; there must be among those who hear all this, some who will think, inquire, and in the end join the persecuted church. Thus wonderfully does God act in accomplishing his plans, and thus marvellously are sinners brought to enjoy salvation.

Who does not desire to stay and contemplate again and again this most lovely scene? The minister of Christ preaches the message of mercy to the professed people of Jehovah, who reject it with scorn, and lead him, shaking the dust from his raiment upon them, to change the scene of his labors, meeting with a delightful measure of success among those apparently most unlikely to listen to his doctrine. But such was the result of that heavenly influence which opens the hearts of sinners, that "many" even of "the Corinthians," all vicious, corrupt, idolatrous, and proud as they had hitherto been,

“hearing, believed.” Can it, we are ready to ask, be possible? The fact is certain. Nor will they be satisfied without a solemn and full profession of their faith, nor without the entire obedience to all the laws of Jesus Christ to which they feel he is justly entitled. Hence we find that believing the gospel of the Lord Jesus, they were baptized.

It is scarcely possible to think too frequently or too practically on the holy promptitude of the primitive believers in Christ. What they did is recorded with great simplicity. Here is no striking record of a great revival, no touching narrative, overlaid with epithets, about the number or the quality of the converts, nor any notes of preparation for the solemn administration of the holy ordinance. But simply, “many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.” The Spirit of God did indeed descend on that assembly; his happy influence was powerfully exerted, doubtless as the effect of fervent prayer, and of faithful preaching;—the truth was received in the love of it; and the believers made haste and delayed not to keep the commandments of heaven.

It would be worse than idle to suppose that these Corinthians regarded baptism either as an unmeaning ceremony, or as only intended to produce an effect on the mind for the time being. It was a badge of discipleship,—the livery of the great Captain of salvation,—an act binding them to the cause and the church of the crucified Messiah, which neither they nor their neighbors could ever forget. How important to understand the scripture doctrine of divine ordinances, and to remember the solemn responsibility connected with the consecration of ourselves to God! Who can ever conceive of all the consequences to themselves and to the universe of the faith and the baptism of Paul's hearers at Corinth?

We find, however, that all is not smooth and pleasant for the apostle even here. He becomes discouraged; possibly some of the imperfections which so distinctly marked the Corinthian church in after times began to appear now; perhaps, too, the persecution of the Jews became hotter than heretofore; and the depression of spirits so well known to the faithful servants of Christ, all seem to have discouraged Paul, and to have al-

most induced him to leave the city. But he receives an intimation from heaven, which he cannot misunderstand, that he must not depart; that God has much people in the city, whom he must bring to the knowledge of Christ, and that in the prosecution of his duty he shall be protected from all harm. Happy it is for the minister of Christ to know that God will, even in times of difficulty and trial, bless his word to the conversion of sinners, and to the edification of his church! Paul continued for nearly two years to preach in the city, and no doubt was favored with great success in his work. The number of those who believed and were baptized we cannot tell; this however shall, at the last day, be known to the honor of Christ, the satisfaction of Paul, and the joy of the church.

It would be well if ministers of Jesus Christ, and other Christians would derive encouragement from Paul's ultimate success at Corinth, to persevere in holy efforts to establish the cause of Christ in what may appear very unpromising places. The word of God cannot be published in vain; the holy purposes of Jehovah in the salvation

of sinners shall be accomplished ; the Gospel must prove the manifestation of Divine power. Let us, then, have confidence in the Gospel and its Author, and always labor till success accompanies our exertions. Paul might well say to these Corinthians, "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

The whole instruction to be derived from this pleasing narrative, and the influence it should have upon us, may be summed up in the words of a Christian poet : —

O how much his people owe him !
O what love our Lord has shown !
Well may we surrender to him
All that once we called our own ;
Lord, we give ourselves to thee,
Thou our guide, our Master be.

THE CHRISTIANS AT EPHESUS.

ACTS XIX.

See, beneath the peaceful flood,
In the way ordained of God,
Joyful converts meekly bow,
Taking heaven's holy vow.

It is a striking feature in the conduct of the apostles, that their ministry was especially directed to the largest and most important cities. For this there existed the most substantial and weighty reasons. Here were the seats of learning, and the abodes of intellectual men. Christianity professed to come from heaven, and demanded that all should investigate its claims, and yield themselves to its government; and it made its appeals to the masters of reasoning and the lights of the public mind. If *they* were compelled to admit its truth and importance, minds of an inferior order would the more readily give it credence and consider its claims. The more rigidly Christianity be

investigated, provided it be done in a right spirit and with a sincere view to ascertain truth, the better. It appeals to all men, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

There is another reason why the religion of Christ has always been specially published in large cities. Here are the abodes of very many persons, and the seats of moral influence. If a good impression be made here, it will rapidly extend itself over the city, and among the surrounding villages. As the religion of Jesus has a reference to happiness in every aspect of it, the more extensively and the more rapidly it prevails the better; and every one must see that if it obtains influence among the more dense and intelligent parts of the population of a country, it will soon operate as leaven, and pervade the whole land. It attacks idolatry and power in their strongest holds, and having gained a triumph over them there, it more easily accomplishes its purposes of mercy elsewhere.

Ephesus, in every view that could be taken of it, was a most important city. It was the capital of Ionia, in Asia Minor, and

situated near the mouth of the river Cayster, about forty miles south of Smyrna, it was the most beautiful and fertile part of that country. Its climate is represented as remarkably mild, and its air as distinguished for purity. The manners of its inhabitants were amiable and refined, and all their habits luxurious and seductive. It can excite no surprise that it should be called by Pliny, the ornament of Asia, and by Stephens, the eminent geographer, the most illustrious of its cities.

Distinguished above all the magnificent buildings of this splendid city, was the temple devoted to the goddess Diana. This building, which was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the world, was about four hundred and twenty-five feet in length, two hundred and twenty in breadth, and of corresponding height. The roof was supported by one hundred and twenty-seven pillars, each sixty feet high, presented by as many kings. This celebrated temple was not fully completed till two hundred and twenty years after its foundation. No less than seven times was it set on fire, and was at length consumed, by the hand of an incendiary,

but rebuilt before the times of the apostles, and invested with much of its former magnificence, and that, to a great extent, by the female liberality of the city.

The influence of idolatry on the morals of Ephesus, was exceedingly awful. The prince of darkness seemed to make it the special place of his abode. It is supposed that here were first invented those obscure mystical spells and charms, by means of which the people pretended to heal diseases, and drive away evil spirits, of which we so frequently read in the ancient writers. It was indeed wisely arranged by the good providence of God, that here the full power of the gospel should be tried, and that Ephesus should become as important as a centre of influence in the Christian world, as it had been in Paganism, and in connexion with the Roman government, it being the residence of one of its Proconsuls, and the seat of the courts of justice in Asia Minor.

The city of Ephesus, thus presenting strong claims on the attention of the servants of Jesus, was first visited by the apostle Paul in the year fifty-four. It was the abode of a considerable number of Jews,

among whom, in every city, Paul generally commenced his ministry; with these his brethren in Ephesus, he seems to have spent a very short time, and then to have proceeded, according to a previous arrangement, to a religious festival at Jerusalem.

A few weeks or months after this first visit to Ephesus, the apostle returned to the city, and spent there nearly three years, a longer period than he seems ever to have spent elsewhere, and assuredly it was not spent in vain.

We are now led to consider some circumstances connected with Paul, at Ephesus, of deep interest and importance. On his return from Jerusalem, he became acquainted with a class of persons who seemed equally remote from the Jews and the heathens by whom they were surrounded. It is by no means certain whether they were Jews or proselytes, but it is certain that some time before this they had heard of John the Baptist, had obtained an imperfect knowledge of his mission, and had submitted to the baptism the importance of which he made known; and in the welfare of these persons the apostle became deeply interested.

He soon ascertained that, however desirous they might be of knowing what was right, and of doing what should be pleasing to God, they were exceedingly ignorant. It is difficult to say how small a portion of Christian intelligence may be found in connection with true religion; but assuredly there is neither much enjoyment nor extensive usefulness unless there is also a good degree of scriptural knowledge. These persons had heard of a coming Messiah, and had been baptized into the faith of that great event, but no farther progress had they made than this. They do not even seem to have heard that the Messiah had appeared; and even more ignorant, if possible, were they of the fact that in accordance with ancient prophecy, the Holy Spirit had been bestowed in his gracious and miraculous influences on the church, as the result of the Messiah's priesthood and the prayers of his servants.

We can almost envy the position of Paul as the instructor of these pious Ephesians. We admire the directness of his inquiries, and the simplicity and humility of his hearers. We grieve over their ignorance, but

rejoice that they have now obtained so efficient an instructor. We can sympathize with their surprise, their admiration, and their joy as the great and spiritual truths of the new covenant are unfolded before them. They had long been thirsting for more scriptural knowledge and happiness, and now their desires are more than gratified. If their previous ignorance had been great, their present attainments were enviable. May we rejoice in the far higher privileges which we enjoy, greater than these Ephesian disciples ever knew ; and may we aim gratefully to improve them to the honor of Jesus Christ.

While every relationship we sustain involves in it corresponding duties, so those duties increase in their obligations with our advances in knowledge. So far as these Ephesian believers had been acquainted with the way of truth, they had walked in it ; but now a flood of light from heaven had burst in upon their souls, and their desire was to glorify God to the utmost of their capabilities. Nor were they long left in ignorance as to their duty. Hitherto they had known but little even of baptism, the

very first practical step in the profession of Christ Jesus; but the apostle undertakes now to explain the subject in its whole character and import. They are made acquainted with Jesus and his salvation, and with the Holy Spirit and his influences; their hearts are brought entirely under the enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying government of Jesus Christ, and their concern is manifested fully to glorify him in their whole life and conversation.

And what now was their first duty? They had heard of the character, the work, and the death of the adorable Messiah; and they felt the force of his claims on their love and obedience. They were instructed in the nature of his doctrines, and the laws of his kingdom, and most readily did they give evidence of their faith and love by being baptized in his name, and dedicating themselves to his glory. They made no excuse for abstaining from duty because they had been baptized before; they had not till now believed in Christ, and could not therefore render acceptable obedience. And now that they saw and felt a Saviour's love to them, it was impossible that their holy gratitude

should not inquire in what manner they could profess their attachment to him before the world. These twelve men therefore became more publicly and more decidedly the servants of Jesus Christ than any others around them.

We cannot but admire the wisdom and goodness of the Holy Spirit in enabling his people to "follow on to know the Lord." It has been thought, with high probability, that these persons had not been baptized by John himself in Palestine, or they would not have been so ignorant of the Messiah and the results of His death; but that they had become acquainted with some teacher after the death of the Baptist, when, consequently, his baptism was a nullity, for we never hear of the ordinance after his death till Jesus gave his high commission. To this teacher the Ephesians seem to have listened, and to have received baptism at his hands; but now they had heard of "Jesus and the resurrection," and had become informed as to the character and influences of the Holy Spirit, both in his miraculous and gracious influences, they received "the truth as in Jesus," were introduced to new scenes and responsibilities,

and felt it every way suitable that in a proper manner, and from an apostle of Christ they should be baptized into Christian fellowship, and be recognized as followers of the Son of God. Here is another illustration of the truth that "if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

The blessings which God bestows on his people are ever extending themselves. He continues to prosper them with an increase of his favors, and makes them the happy agents of diffusing the highest happiness among others. So it proved at Ephesus. Here was the commencement of a Christian church. These baptized believers in Christ sustained their profession of piety amidst the opposition and the infidelity of their ungodly neighbors. Nothing could move them from their allegiance to Christ; nothing could lessen their zeal for the advancement of his honor.

It is to be supposed that this conduct of the Ephesian believers would produce a powerful effect, both in Ephesus itself, and among the churches of Christ in other places. In the great city, where Diana was worship-

ped as supreme, the cause of Jesus Christ obtained a firm hold; and no power could destroy it. Many assumed the Christian profession, and bore a silent but effective testimony against the idolatry and its attendant abominations, by which they were surrounded. Here too was Paul from sabbath to sabbath, with many tears, addressing saints and sinners. How interesting—how morally sublime, to see the holy man of God weeping over the sins and the gloomy prospects of ungodly men in the weekly assemblies, expostulating with them on their crime and danger, and inviting them to the Cross of Christ; and then during the week, following up his sabbath labors by visiting “from house to house.” O the unspeakable value of a holy, affectionate, and devoted ministry to the church and the world!

The scenes connected with the comparatively protracted ministry of the apostle at Ephesus, were, as usual, various. Faithful preaching, benevolent miracles, and a life of holy consistency marked the career of Paul, while opposition to the gospel distinguished one class of the citizens, and faith and obedience to Christ another. It

is always interesting to mark decision of character in any community. The most energetic, are generally, in the end, the best men. A sense of responsibility resting on a man often leads to examination, and the pursuit of a right course. One of the worst things among men is a spirit of listless indifference. When men begin really to *think*, we may hope they will soon think rightly. So seems the idea of the Royal Psalmist, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies." Thoughtlessness is one of man's greatest enemies; and no effort can be too great which shall draw him from it.

The happy results of Paul's ministry at Ephesus, and of the baptism of these first twelve men were great, and continued for many years. He who at first took one of a city and brought him to Zion, carried on his work, till two, or even more, of a family were introduced to his church. It is important to contemplate the fact, and not less important that it should have a practical influence upon us,—that the greatest events originate in small ones. We see a few persons in a city or village believing the gospel,

and being baptized into Christ; they are fully conscious of their weakness, but are depending on the grace of Jesus, and make efforts for his glory; and he condescends to increase their number and to extend their usefulness. Thus does he make them happy, and secure the honor to his own name. Let the feeling and the language of our hearts ever be:—

Yet, if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great
That I would give him all.

THE CHRISTIANS AT ROME AND COLOSSE.

ROMANS VI.—COLOSSIANS II.

Glad we hear, from day to day,
What the Lord is doing;
How the gospel wins its way,
Sinners' hearts subduing :
What a glorious work is his!
Work, for ever lasting;
Every other work but this
Fading is and wasting.

KELLY.

MUCH is to be learned from the principles on which the apostles evidently proceeded in their epistles to the churches. We are now speaking of the Christians at Rome and Colosse. The former city is well known for its antiquity and its grandeur as the mistress of the world. By whom, or under what circumstances the gospel was first introduced to it, we have no certain knowledge, though it was clearly at an early period; and probably, by some of its inha-

bitants, who were present on the memorable day of Pentecost. The faith of this church was soon spoken of throughout the world; and its numbers and character were such as to attract the attention of the government, and to draw upon them the implacable rage of the sanguinary tyrant, Nero. Paul, who at that time had not seen these believers in Christ, addressed to them an epistle about the year 57, from Corinth, and sent it by the hand of Phebe, a deaconess of a neighboring church at Cenchrea.

There seems somewhat exceedingly instructive in the fact that the gospel was introduced into Rome itself, and that the church flourished there, as it would appear, without the agency of any one of the apostles. What interest would now be excited could we ascertain by whom this first European Christian community was formed! No church could be more important than this, but in no one is human agency less seen. The cause, however, being established, it was highly appropriate that Paul should write to them this epistle. The imperial city had often been indebted to Tarsus for some of its wisest and best teachers; and

now a scholar, and a recipient of Divine influence of that city, communicates instruction to some of its inhabitants of the highest character ; which heavenly instruction has ever since been acting on the world. This city also he visited, more than once ; here he dwelt for at least two years at one time, in the prosecution of his ministry ; and here, it would seem, by the order of the infamous Nero, he sealed his faith in the gospel by the cheerful surrender of his life. The whole church must ever bless God for Paul, one of the most valuable of all its instructors.

It has been usually supposed that the church at Rome originally consisted of converted Jews, to whom others of different extraction were gradually added ; new branches, engrafted, as it were, on the original stock. Jews certainly resided in that city in very large numbers, and enjoyed the privilege of living according to their own laws. Not a few of them were descendants of those who about one hundred and twenty years before the date of Paul's epistle had been sent as slaves, by Pompey, from Judea to Rome. How joyful to those who had

groaned under a yoke far heavier than their bondage, must have been the glad tidings of salvation ; and how wise the arrangement that to such a people should be sent the most argumentative of all the sacred writings !

Equal uncertainty also marks the time and circumstances of the introduction of Christianity into Colosse, a city of Phrygia. The most probable account of it is that Epaphras, or Epaphroditus, an evangelist, whom Paul had delegated to preach the gospel, introduced it into this city. So true is it that great events are not always brought about by distinguished men, but by agents of whom a remembrance is scarcely retained. Paul had never seen these Christians, but he knew their general character and necessities, just as he did those of the believers at Rome, and addressed to them most affectionate and appropriate counsels, from the last named city, while imprisoned in it, about the year 60 ; from which place also, and nearly at the same time, he wrote to Philemon, and to the church at Ephesus.

It frequently occurs in the providence of God that his people are prepared for the

events which overtake them, even though they are not aware of his arrangements. How often have we observed the rapid progress of Christians in knowledge and holiness, immediately before they have been suddenly and unexpectedly removed to heaven. So these Colossian believers were favored with this epistle, from which we cannot doubt they derived great improvement; and in little more than a year after they had received it, their whole city, with nearly all its inhabitants, together with Laodicea and Hierapolis, was destroyed by an earthquake.

Whether in these cities of Rome and Colosse, the members of the churches had originally been Jews, or, as Gentiles, had cherished idolatry, and lived under its influence, they had, before these letters were addressed to them, heard the testimony of Jesus, had believed the holy message, and had committed their souls into the hands of the crucified and risen Messiah. Be the gospel preached by whom it may, to whatever class of persons, in whatever age, and in whatever place, it is adapted to the condition of its hearers, and when accompanied

by the influences of the Holy Spirit will ever produce the same happy results.

We cannot have read these epistles with attention without observing how desirous their writer appears to bring Christians into as close an union as possible with their adorable Master. As he is "all and in all" to the believer, so must he be the source of all our happiness; while union with him shows us the dignity and privilege connected with the performance of the duties which he has enjoined. The apostle, on these principles, reminds the Christians at Rome and Colosse of Christ, and of their having been "buried with him in baptism," and of having been raised from spiritual death purposely that they might live to serve Jesus and to rejoice in his favor.

The death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus must ever appear to us of overwhelming importance; and if it shall be evident that his people are in any way identified with him in these great transactions, the contemplation of the subject must produce extraordinary effects. Jesus Christ did indeed die, and as proof of that fact, we refer to his burial. His baptism prefi-

gured this event, as separating him for God, and detaching him entirely from the world, while his resurrection demonstrated the acceptance of his atonement, and showed him as rising from earth, henceforth to live and act in heaven.

While we admire this important and comprehensive arrangement of infinite wisdom, the apostle steps in with the doctrine that in all this Christians are identified with Christ; and would thus remind us of our obligations, and our prospects. Of our obligations, being united with Christ in the solemn act of baptism, to live and act even as he did, being dead to sin, and manifesting activity and energy in holiness. And as he rose from the dead with the prospect of eternal life and happiness, even such is the prospect of each of his servants.

Would that every baptized Christian in the world could be persuaded to remember his solemn responsibility! He has been made acquainted with the Divine scheme of salvation, and has come to Christ for the pardon of his sins; under the humble hope of enjoying the grace of that great Saviour, he has copied his example, and walked down

with him to the baptismal tomb ; thus professing to die to sin and the world, and rising to new pursuits, duties, and enjoyments.

Nor would the apostle allow Christians to forget the ordinance of baptism, as it is connected with the Holy Spirit. In addressing the Colossians he reminds them of the work of that Great Being in his operations on the hearts of Christians, and as being the agent of the Messiah's resurrection. He has made us to see the importance of the truth relating to Christ, has led us to the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah, and has thus prepared us for baptism, the act of devotedness to Christ. Thus we are led to see in the baptism of Jesus, the example of the Great Head of his church, and the approbation of the Eternal Father, testified by his own voice, and now we see the Holy Spirit bringing us into union with Christ in his baptism and his resurrection.

How important it is for the Christian always to remember that evil affections, like noxious weeds, constantly increase of themselves, while the Christian graces, like exotics, at all times require the nurture of heaven. What is so well adapted to check

the former and nourish the latter as the solemn and constant remembrance of our identity with a dying and rising Saviour, as professed in our baptism? We have nothing now to do with our former state, seeing we have renounced the character we bore, and have been buried to the world in which we once lived. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" We have cast off sin, Satan, and the world, and have risen to live in the church, active for Christ and society, till called to the full and perfect enjoyment of our life in heaven. It has been well said, that when the men of the earth see a baptized Christian in their ranks, and engaged in their own pursuits, they may justly regard him as an apparition who appears in a wrong world. Ever let us practically remember that we have risen to "newness of life."

Nothing can be more important than that Christians should solemnly review a transaction which brings them so closely into connection with the Redeemer of their souls. Are you, baptized Christians, living and acting worthy of your profession and your

dignity? Are you devoted to the Saviour as he is devoted to you? Have you not many sins and many violations of your solemn engagements to confess before him? Never let it be forgotten that the covenant into which you entered with Christ at your baptism cannot be violated without his consent, which he can never give.

And if our little volume should fall into the hands of a believer in Jesus Christ who has never put him on by baptism,—who has never assumed this his own badge of professing attachment to him, we would seriously entreat him to inquire whether he is quite sure that he is walking as *He* walked, and in a manner which the Saviour, who died for him, can approve. Is it quite certain that you can say to him in the last great day that you have done whatsoever he commanded you? Let no persuasion of your fellow sinners, let no fear of man deter you from what you feel to be your duty. Remember that Christ has connected the answer of a good conscience, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit, with obedience to his requirements. “Blessed are all they who do his commandments.”

It is quite possible that the reader of our thoughts may be numbered with those with whom we sometimes so happily meet, who are about to put on the Lord Jesus in this holy ordinance. It may be that the grace of God has deeply impressed your mind with the fact that the flower of youth never looks so lovely as when it bends towards the Sun of Righteousness. Under this blessed persuasion your heart has been given to Christ, and you are about to tell the church and the world that you now commence a new life, which shall be exclusively his. Hail, beloved friend! in the name of the whole church, and of its Great Head, we cordially congratulate you. Your privilege is infinitely greater, your honor unspeakably higher than any which earth can bestow. A child of God, a follower of the blessed Jesus! Remember that you owe the whole change in your character and prospects to infinite and sovereign mercy. Cherish the ever deepening impression, that you are not your own, but the special property of Christ;—a lamb of his fold, a member of his body. Go forth to the discharge of your duty, to the enjoyment of the privilege of assuming the Christian

name with your whole soul, throwing all your hopes for mercy on the Lord Jesus. Forget not that this is the commencement of a new, an arduous, and possibly an extended career of labor and suffering in the highest and holiest cause. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" never boast of having put on the harness till you have accomplished the victory; but thankfully rejoice in the honor of having been permitted to engage in Messiah's battle against sin and hell; and ever look to him for strength, direction, and final conquest. So shall you, if spared till 'a good old age,' exult like the venerable Beza, "I bless God for many, many mercies, but most of all that he brought me to the enjoyment of his love at sixteen." Never did we hear of a dying Christian regretting either that he began to serve Jesus too soon, or that he had devoted too much energy to his service; but we have met with not a few who expressed their gratitude to the grace of God for an early acquaintance with him; while many have bitterly regretted that they did not set out to heaven still earlier in life than they did! Dear young reader, act promptly,—with a

view to your whole existence,—intensely pursue happiness, and that in the path of entire evangelical obedience to the authority of Jesus.

O how important is it that all who hear the gospel of redeeming mercy should cherish the recollection that a solemn period is approaching, when the Great Head of the church shall appear as the Judge of the world. What account, dear reader, will you then be able to give, if you have not obeyed his gospel? How insignificant will every excuse for neglect which you have been accustomed to make, appear when looked at as you stand exposed to his scrutiny. What a mighty influence should the thought that all our conduct must undergo his review have upon us! If we never forget this fact, would not the conduct of baptized Christians be far more holy than it is? And would not some believers in Jesus, who have hitherto disobeyed him, be prompt in fulfilling his high command? Oh, seriously reflect that we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ. Surely the remembrance of having neglected any one of his commands must be unwelcome in that great day of account!

A word or two to another class of persons, and we bid farewell to our friendly readers. It is more than possible that the eye which is fixed on this page, has never yet looked up to God for life and salvation, and that the hands which have with interest and pleasure turned over these narratives, are yet devoted to the practice of sin. It may have been the case that you have often witnessed the dedication of your friends, perhaps your endeared relatives, to God and his church, in this holy ordinance;—it may possibly have been the fact that you have heard many an ardent petition presented to God, accompanied with many tears, that you also might die to sin and rise to God and to happiness. And yet you remain unconverted—unimpressed—indifferent. Dear friend, baptism is not your duty. We dare not, while you are yet an unbeliever, invite you to the hallowed waters. You have no part or lot in the matter. You are far from God, and under his —— no, we will not write the word; for we rejoice to hear from heaven the voice of infinite Love inviting you to the reception of pardon, of salvation, of eternally growing joy. Believe, beloved

reader, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—Then, the heart, being given to him, let the life also, in this blessed ordinance be consecrated to his service. Thus happiness, usefulness and joy, shall be eternally yours.

'Tis thus that the saints must obey,
Their work must be thoroughly done ;
Though death should appear in the way,
Their duty is still to go on.

The Lord will approve at the last
Those only who thus persevere ;
And such, when the conflict is past,
Before him with joy shall appear.

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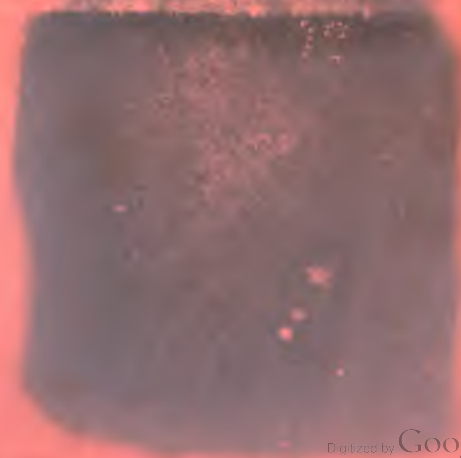
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